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WRESTLING

ANNUAL FOR 1973 #4

PEDRO MORALES

**WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR**

SPECIAL SECTIONS:

THE ANNUAL
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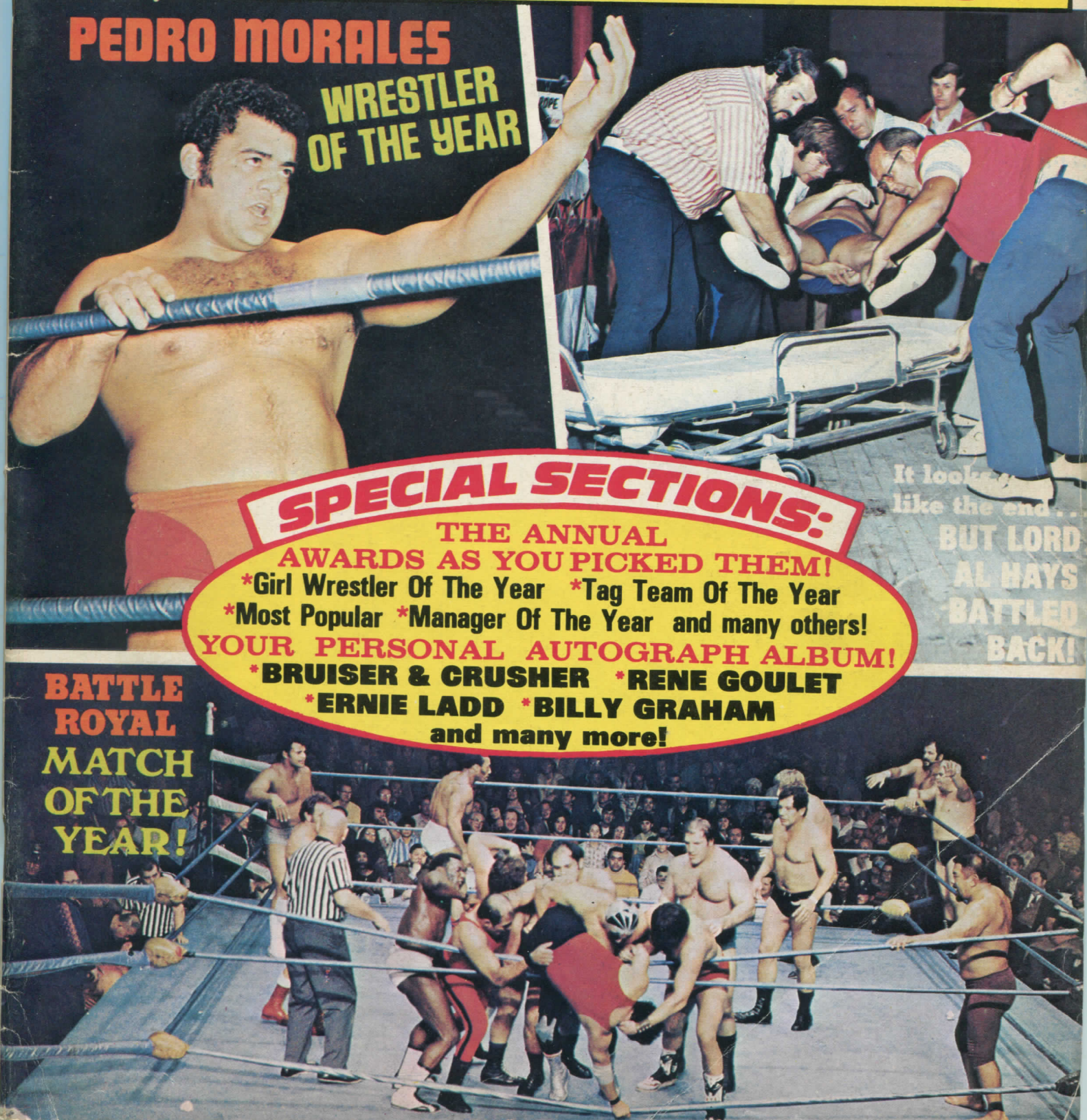
*BRUISER & CRUSHER *RENE GOULET

*ERNIE LADD *BILLY GRAHAM

and many more!

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ROYAL
MATCH
OF THE
YEAR!**

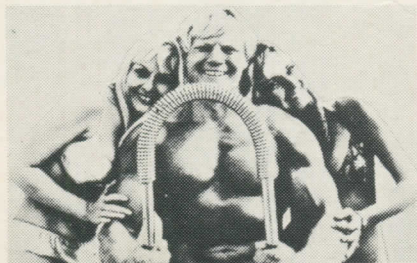
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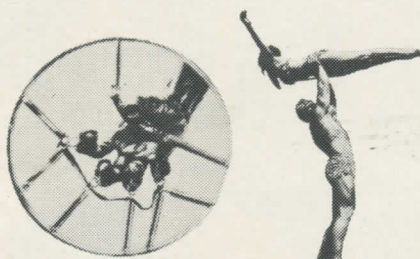
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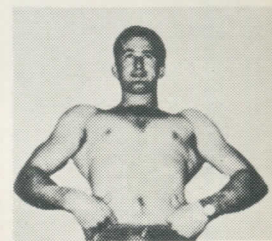
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Wrestling

ANNUAL FOR 1973

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WRESTLING ANNUAL is part of the Victory Sports Series, which is published 52 times per year and includes INSIDE WRESTLING, THE WRESTLER, WRESTLING ANNUAL, WRESTLING YEARBOOK, WORLD BOXING, BOXING INTERNATIONAL, BOXING ANNUAL and BIG BOOK OF BOXING. Published by G.C. LONDON PUBLISHING CORPORATION, Box 58, Rockville Centre, New York 11571. Stanley Weston President. 60 cents per copy. Subscription rates for each series is published in every issue. All rights reserved.

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LETTERS

CLAWDOG

In the 1972 ANNUAL #3 you had a hysterical feature called "The Lighter Side Of Wrestling." One of the photos still makes me laugh just as hard as when I first saw it. I'm speaking of the one where the Clawman is relaxing on his living room couch with his wife, who's wearing a mask, and his dog, who is also wearing a mask! I've never seen anything like it!

MARY GRNIDEL
Providence, R.I.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

Well, it's about time somebody put out a magazine showing "The Other Champions." Most fans are inclined to believe there are only three champs, Pedro Morales, Dory Funk Jr. and Verne Gagne, when guys like Johnny Powers and Jerry Brisco are ignored because they hold regional titles. Thanks for the look at the other champs. It was a pleasure to read about them.

KENNETH ROGERS
Cleveland, Ohio

PLEASE—NO MORE!

What a waste of paper that ANNUAL #3 was. How could you even think that anyone would be interested in reading about anyone but George Steele. You can't feed us this garbage about other champions. There is only one champion. He holds every single belt there is. That's George Steele, baby. Wise up and do a full magazine devoted to him!

CHARLIE KERRMAN
Boston, Mass.

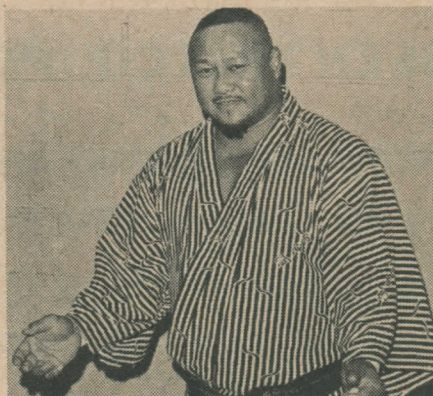
THE OTHER CHAMPIONS

I don't know how you could classify Bobo Brazil as just another

champion. He's a standout among champions and I think it was an insult that you spent only one page on him. Bobo is a veteran of the ring wars and has held every major title. How about a "This Is Your Life" feature about Bobo? He deserves it!

GARY LUCCOI
Detroit, Mich.

Abdullah The Butcher may claim the Asiatic championship but for my money, the top challenger, Professor Toru Tanaka, is the champion. A champion should be able to wrestle scientifically and conduct himself as a gentleman in

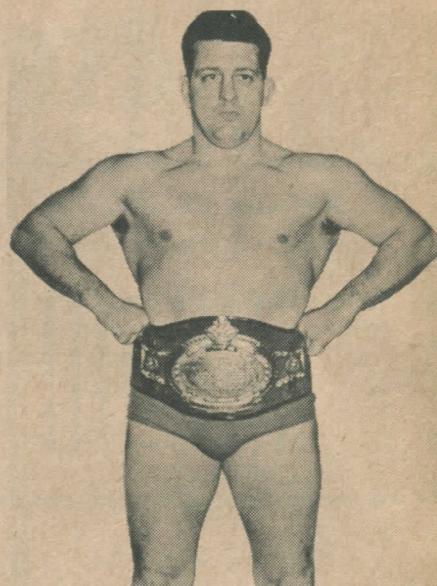


Toru Tanaka's been described as many things, but this is the first time he's been considered a "gentleman" or somebody who's a "scientific wrestler."

and out of the ring. That's Tanaka. Abdullah is just a vicious animal who should be put away in some insane asylum.

NATALE COLWITH
Philadelphia, Pa.

Billy Robinson, the British Commonwealth Champion, is the classiest wrestler I've seen in the past 20 years. He's better than Verne Gagne was at his peak, which was quite a while ago. I think that if he's given the chance, Billy will become the undisputed world champion. He's better than Gagne,



Better than Verne Gagne, Dory Funk Jr. and Pedro Morales put together. That's what one fan thinks about Billy Robinson.

Pedro Morales and Dory Funk Jr. put together.

EDWARD BILLARD
Minneapolis, Minn.

I'm glad that Johnny Powers isn't the North American Champion anymore. He was at the time your ANNUAL #3 came out, but since has been dethroned by none other than Johnny Valentine. Dom Denucci, the guy you rated as top challenger to Powers' title, couldn't whip a fly. Valentine will slaughter him just as he did Powers.

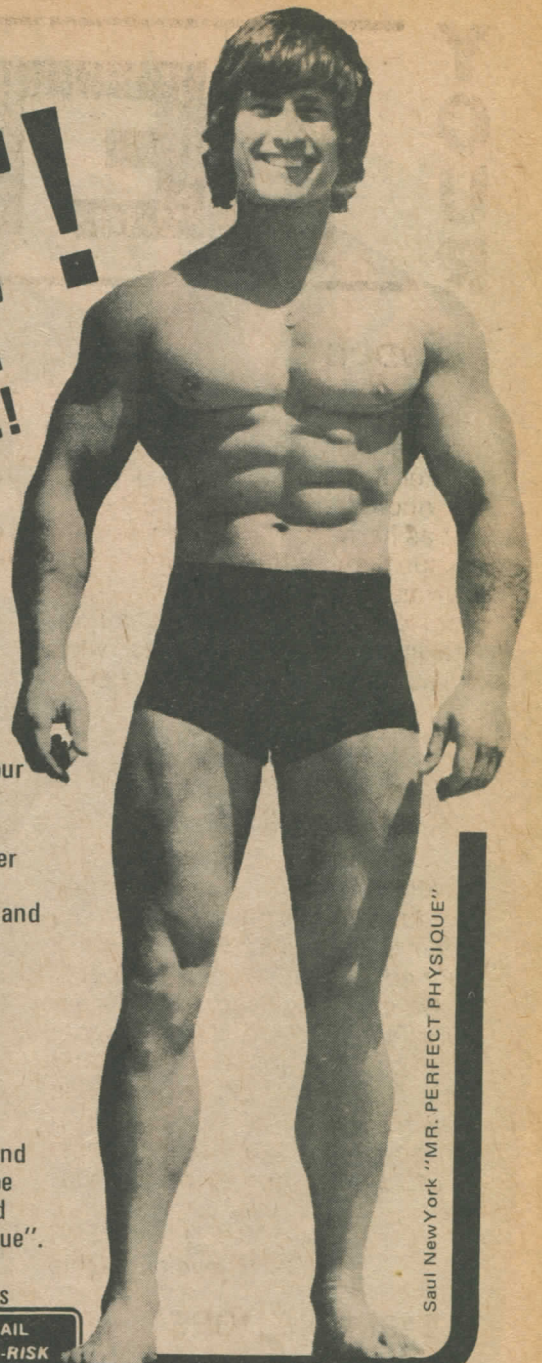
MARK SHAKIN
Pittsburgh, PA.

Edouard Carpentier is a far superior wrestler than Mad Dog Vachon. Ed has held the Grand Prix title many more times than Vachon. He's always won the belt fair and square while Vachon has only won on questionable decisions. Carpentier is a great cham-

(Continued on page 60)

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Yes, you too can have a body like "Mr. Perfect Physique" Saul NewYork (pictured above). He followed our HERCULES II Muscle Building Course for just a few short weeks and gained 3" on each arm, 4" on his chest and beefed up his legs, back and stomach muscles until he reached his present Super Build — a body good enough to win him the World's coveted "Mr. Perfect Physique" title.

Yes, our Muscle Building Secrets contained in HERCULES II can transform your present body into the kind of handsome rippling muscularity that other guys respect and all girls 'flip' over.

It doesn't matter if you own the skinniest, flabbiest body in the world - whether you are tall or short young or not so young, you really can muscle up instantly by using our easy to follow step-by-step HERCULES II plan. It's entirely safe and so easy to do next to other courses. It will amaze you! There are no gimmicks, gadgets or costly weights to buy. Just simple, yet terrifyingly effective steps to muscledom. It only takes a few minutes a day of your time.

Just how big you build your body is entirely up to you. 10, 20, 30 pounds of solid muscle! You can do it! In fact any guy in normal health can do it.

JUST IMAGINE — IN A FEW SHORT WEEKS FROM NOW YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FLEX THOSE BULGING BICEPS AND YOUR FRIENDS WILL GASP IN ASTONISHMENT. Pick up a 6 inch spike, bend it effortlessly and hand it to your buddy. Invite him to straighten it. Knowing average guys, he won't be able to budge it, however red-faced he gets trying. Yes! Our New secret method can change your whole life. Why not follow in the steps of "Mr. Perfect Physique". Remember the sooner you send the order form at the bottom of this page, the sooner you will be helping yourself to a lion's share of rippling, healthy muscles bursting with power and explosive energy.

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"I have gained 22 pounds of muscle in 30 days - I have put 4" on my arms - A million thanks to your New Hercules II program." Bill Canning

"I was a skinny weakling - I just can't describe how much your course has done for me. The results have been amazing" P.G. Roberts

"I feel great - Look 100% better. Can lift my father above my head" J. Scott

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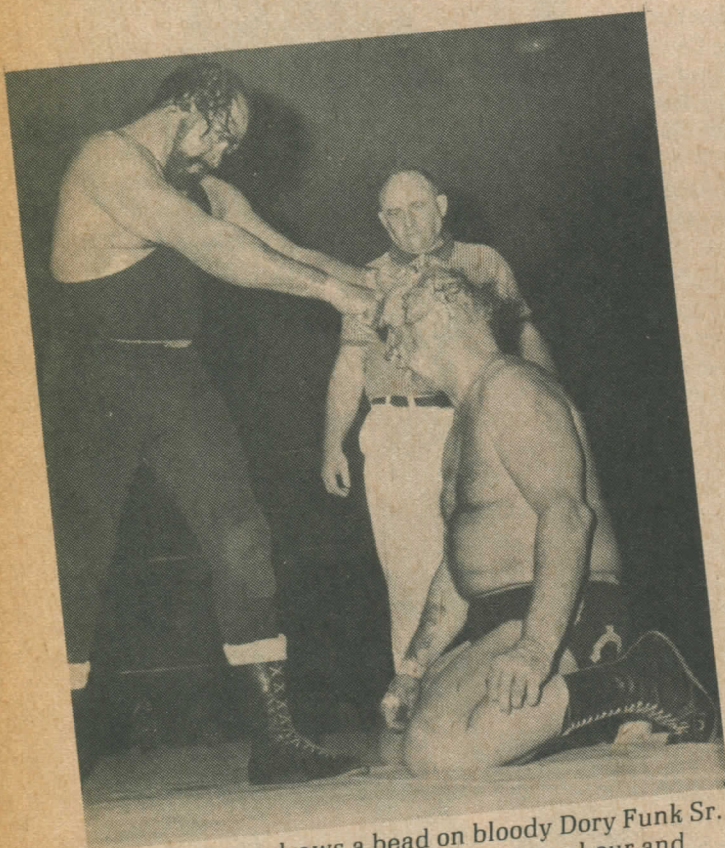
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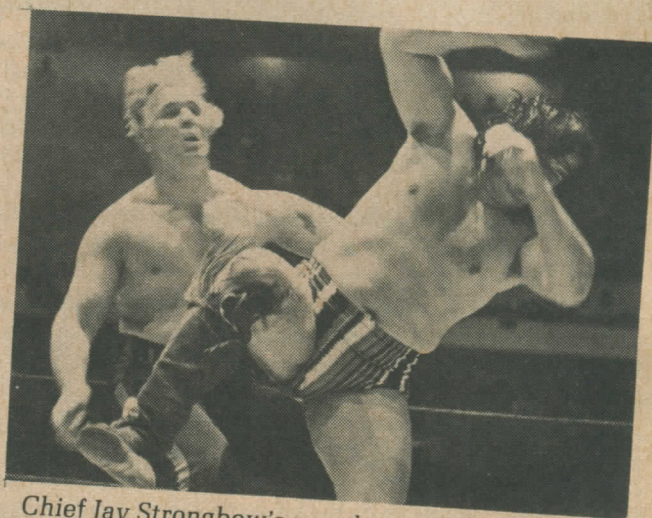
1972

APRIL JANUARY DECEMBER MARCH
JUNE SEPTEMBER NOVEMBER JULY
FEBRUARY AUGUST OCTOBER

A YEAR OF CONTROVERSY



Ciclon Negro draws a bead on bloody Dory Funk Sr. during the bloodbath of the year, a one hour and 44-minute marathon. After it was over, both men had to be hospitalized for exhaustion. It was one of many grudge matches during the year. Dory Sr. and Ciclon Negro are still involved in their feud.



Chief Jay Strongbow's war dance has Handsome Jim Valiant on the defensive. Valiant, under orders of the Grand Wizard, pretended to be friends with Strongbow to learn the secret of the Chief's sleeper hold. The ruse worked.

FEUDS AND CONTROVERSY dominated the 1972 wrestling scene.

Among the feuds, none was more vicious than the war between Dory Funk Sr. and Ciclon Negro. They wrestled in a Texas Death Match that lasted for 27 falls—one hour and 44 minutes! Pools of blood were shed by both sides and at the end of the struggle both men collapsed

(Continued on page 12)

The past year may someday be considered a turning point for professional wrestling. For growth and spectator interest it was an outstanding year. But 1972 also raised numerous controversies and brought about a number of rule changes which, in the long run, could change the course of the sport as we know it today.



An Important Message To Every Man And Woman In America Losing His Or Her Hair

If you are troubled by thinning hair, dandruff, itchy scalp, if you fear approaching baldness, read the rest of this statement carefully. It may mean the difference to you between saving your hair and losing the rest of it to eventual baldness.

Baldness is simply a matter of subtraction. When the number of new hairs fail to equal the number of falling hair, you end up minus your head of hair (bald). Why not avoid baldness by preventing unnecessary loss of hair? Why not turn the tide of battle on your head by eliminating needless causes of hair loss and give Nature a chance to grow more hair for you? Many of the country's dermatologists and other foremost hair and scalp specialists believe that seborrhea, a common scalp disorder, causes hair loss. What is seborrhea? It is a bacterial infection of the scalp that can eventually cause permanent damage to the hair follicles. Its visible evidence is "thinning" hair. Its end result is baldness. Its symptoms are dry, itchy scalp, dandruff, oily hair, head scales, and progressive hair loss.

So, if you are beginning to notice that your forehead is getting larger, beginning to notice that there is too much hair on your comb, beginning to be worried about the dry-

ness of your hair, the itchy scalp, the ugly dandruff — these are **Nature's Red Flags** warning you of impending baldness. Even if you have been losing your hair for some time, don't let seborrhea rob you of the rest of your hair.

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The development of an amazing new hair and scalp medicine called Comate is specifically designed to control seborrhea and stop the hair loss it causes. It offers the opportunity to thousands of men and women losing their hair to bacterial infection to reverse the battle they are now losing on their scalps. By stopping this impediment to normal hair growth, new hairs can grow as Nature intended.

This is how Comate works: (1) It combines in a single scalp treatment the essential corrective factors for normal hair growth. By its rubifacient action it stimulates blood circulation to the scalp, thereby supplying more nutrition to still-alive hair follicles. (2) As a highly effective antiseptic, Comate kills on contact the seborrhea-causing scalp bacteria believed to be a cause of baldness. (3) By its

keratolitic action it dissolves ugly dandruff. By tending to normalize the lubrication of the hair shaft it corrects excessively dry and oily hair. It eliminates head scales and scalp itch.

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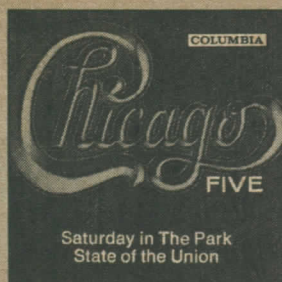
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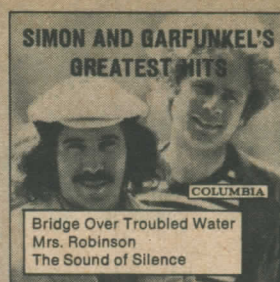
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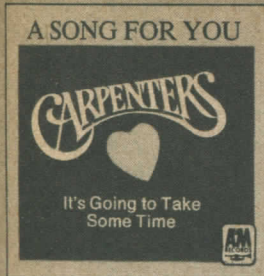
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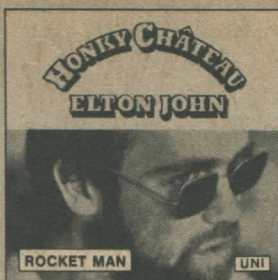
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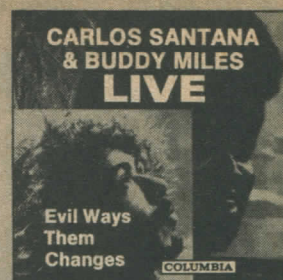
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You may accept or reject selections as follows: whichever Club you join, every four weeks you will receive a new copy of your Club's music magazine, which describes the regular selection for each musical interest . . . plus hundreds of alternate selections from every field of music.

... if you do not want any selection offered, just mail the response card always provided by the date specified

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Whichever Club I've joined, all selections will be described in advance in the Club magazine, sent every four weeks. If I do not wish any selection, I'll mail the card provided by the date specified, or use the card to order any selection I do want. If I want only the regular selection for my musical interest, I need do nothing — it will be shipped automatically. Occasionally, I'll be offered special selections which I may accept or reject by using the dated form provided.

☐ Mr.
☐ Mrs.
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(Please Print) First Name Initial Last Name

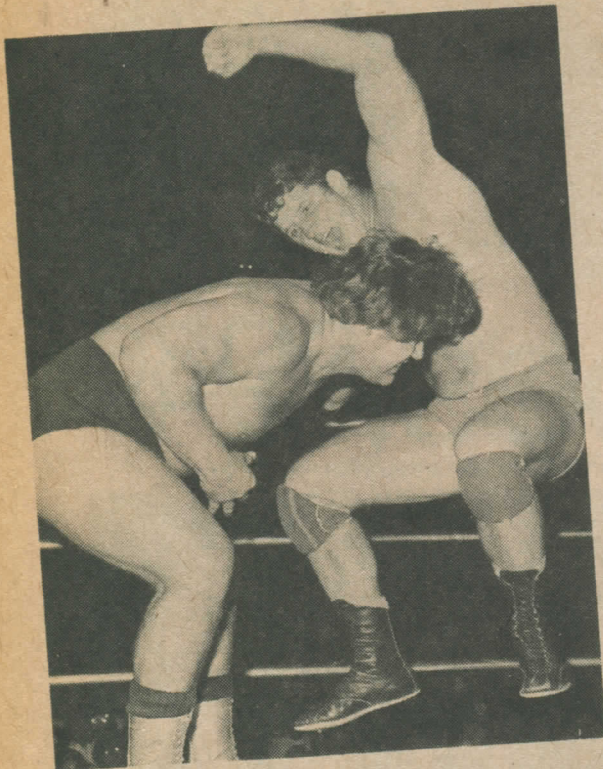
Address.....

City..... State..... & Zip.....

Do You Have A Telephone? (check one) ☐ YES..... ☐ NO
APO, FPO addressees: write for special offer



A YEAR OF CONTROVERSY (Continued from Page 8)



Mighty Igor and manager Ivan Kalmikoff get a chuckle from the story about Ivan's attempt to get Mighty Igor married off (above). Igor's still a bachelor. Left: Terry Funk, who got himself involved in a big feud with the entire city of Los Angeles, pounds Ruben Juarez, one of many men after Terry's hide.

and had to be hospitalized.

A few days later, Dory Sr. walked out of the hospital. But Negro was nowhere to be seen. Rumors of his death swept the country. But a few weeks later he popped up again explaining he'd gone on vacation to recuperate.

Another major feud was the one which erupted between Chief Jay Strongbow and Handsome Jim Valiant. Valiant pretended to befriend the Chief and Strongbow gave him the secret of his sleeper hold. But Jim was working for the Grand Wizard all the time and wound up using that very same sleeper hold on Strongbow.

Chief Wahoo McDaniel and Dusty Rhodes engaged in a riotous series of matches which settled nothing. They still hate each other's guts. The same is true for Ernie Ladd and Abdullah the Butcher. The Sheik and Carlos Rocha. Bruiser & Crusher and Bobby Heenan and his Blackjacks. Eric Froelich and Fritz Von Goering, and Terry Funk and the entire city of Los Angeles!

And speaking of Terry, if there was an award for the most mysterious wrestler of 1972—Terry would win it hands down. After telling us in an exclusive story that "Feuds Will Be The Death Of Me!" Terry turns around and launches feuds with just



It's not controversial, but the photo of Abdullah the Butcher devouring his post-bout raw chicken has to be the picture of the year. Abdullah was involved in a feud with Ernie Ladd which culminated in a wild, brass knucks grudge match in which both men were disqualified. They wound up battling under the stands long after their match had ended and another one was already underway.

about everyone in sight.

Of particular significance is Terry's feud with the people of Los Angeles... people who rank Terry in popularity alongside such as The Sheik and Kenji Shibuya! Terry's always been forced into his older brother's shadow, but this year he made a name for himself, unsavory though it might have been.

Perhaps the longest feud of all came to an end when the State of

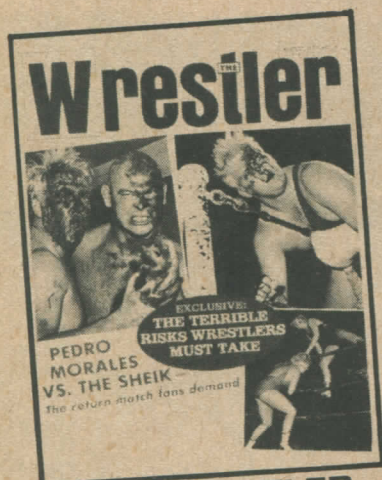
New York dropped a 40-year-old ban on women wrestlers. A concerted effort by the gals finally got the ban erased and the Fabulous Moolah and Vicki Williams made history by becoming the first girl wrestlers to step into a New York ring!

1972 was also a year wracked by controversy. Some states banned chain matches, brass knucks match-

(Continued on page 50)

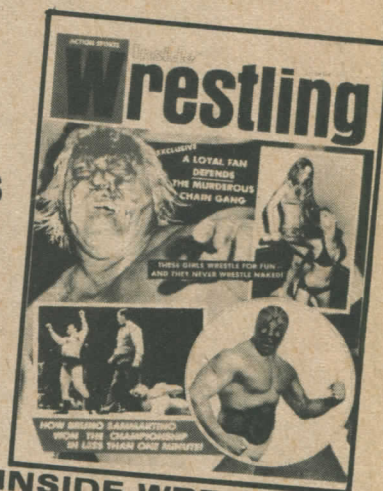
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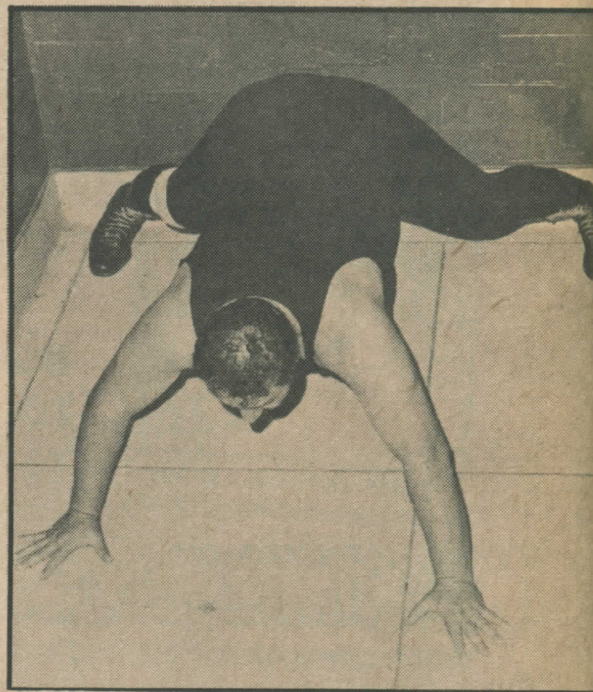
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CATCHING THE WRESTLERS OFF GUARD



There's no such thing as privacy when our photographers are around. Above: The Black Demon is caught without his mask as he does pushups in a corridor. Left: You can't hide in the shower, Harley. We've got you in a position where you can't come out and chase us!

JEEZ!" SCREAMED HARLEY Race. "Don't you guys give people *any* privacy?"

The answer, to be truthful, was no. As far as our photographers are concerned, no place is off limits, no wrestler immune from their inquisitive lenses.

And that's why Harley Race found that he wasn't safe—even in the shower!

Race has an unusual habit. He

showers before as well as after going into the ring.

"There's no feeling in the world as great as when you've just stepped out of a shower," Harley explained after he calmed down. "It really wakes me up.

"Psychological studies have shown that men usually perform better at their jobs if they're wearing a shirt and tie. With me it's like that if I've stepped out of a shower.

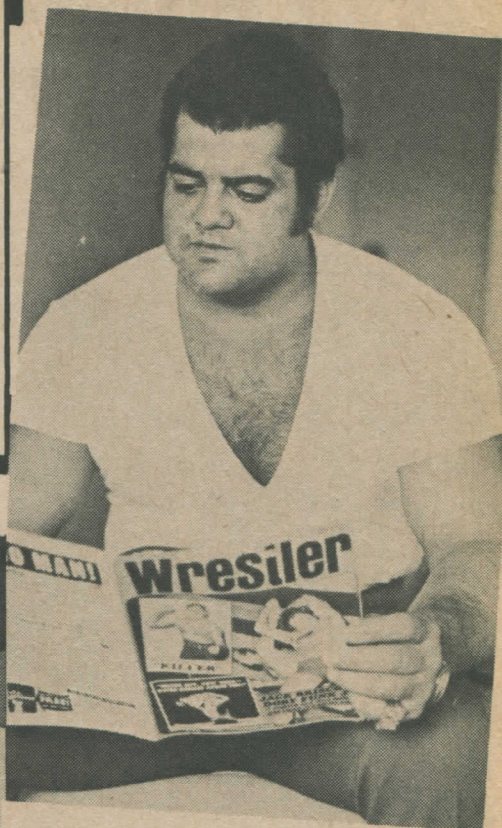
I comb my hair and know I'm gonna look good out there. It relaxes me . . . except when your nosy photographers poke their cameras in there!"

Popular gal wrestler Vicki Williams also believes in looking and feeling her best when she gets into the ring. Vicki was applying eye makeup when our photographer intruded to snap her pre-match activity.

How can an athlete who wrestles three, four, or sometimes even five nights a week psychologically prepare himself for each bout? Isn't there an occasional letdown against certain opponents? Can wrestlers, like football players, psych themselves up for every match? How does a wrestler prepare himself for a bout?

The above questions, somewhat similar in nature, are among the most often-asked ones we receive from readers. They know what goes on during a match and they often get an idea of a wrestler's personality from a television interview. But few fans know what goes on in a wrestler's mind in those crucial moments just before an important bout.

We sent a team of our photographers—the best ones in the business—into the dressing rooms to capture the flavor of how wrestlers prepare for their bouts. They came back with photos unlike any you've ever seen before.



Pedro Morales is so busy reading about the Dory Funk Jr. – Jack Brisco feud (above) he doesn't even realize his picture's being taken. Left: Bill and Dan Miller go over a map as they plan their route to their next appearance. The Miller brothers are both admitted map-reading fanatics.



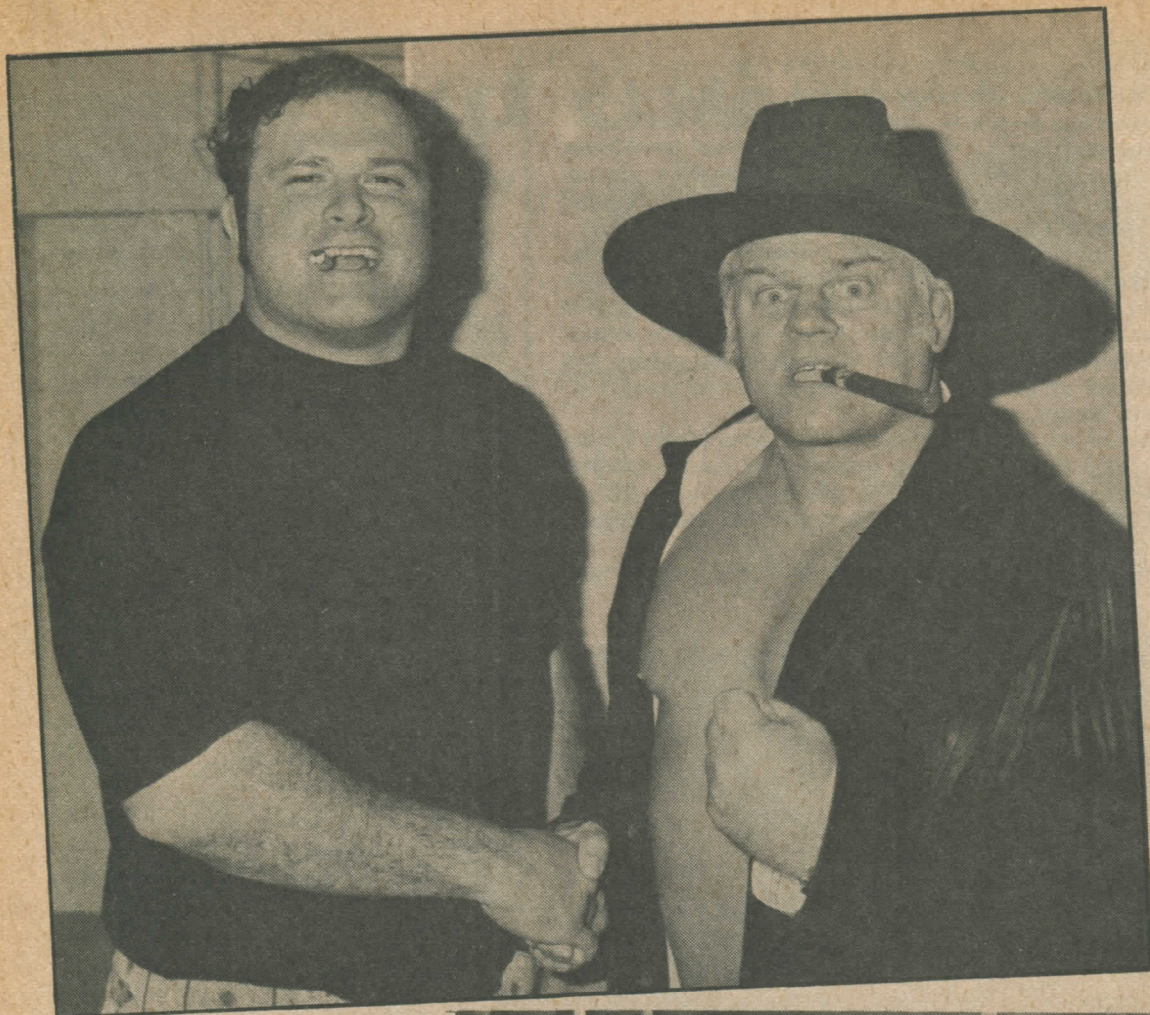
Vicki Williams is a pretty gal, but Vicki wants to make sure she always looks her best in the ring. A little eye shadow should give just the right touch.

"By the time a match is over I can really look messed up," Vicki explained. "My hair becomes stringy and my makeup gets smeared. At least if I look good when I start the match people won't think I always look like I've been through the ring. Besides, I feel better knowing I look nice."

One guy who doesn't care how nice he looks is the Black Demon. But when our photographer snap-

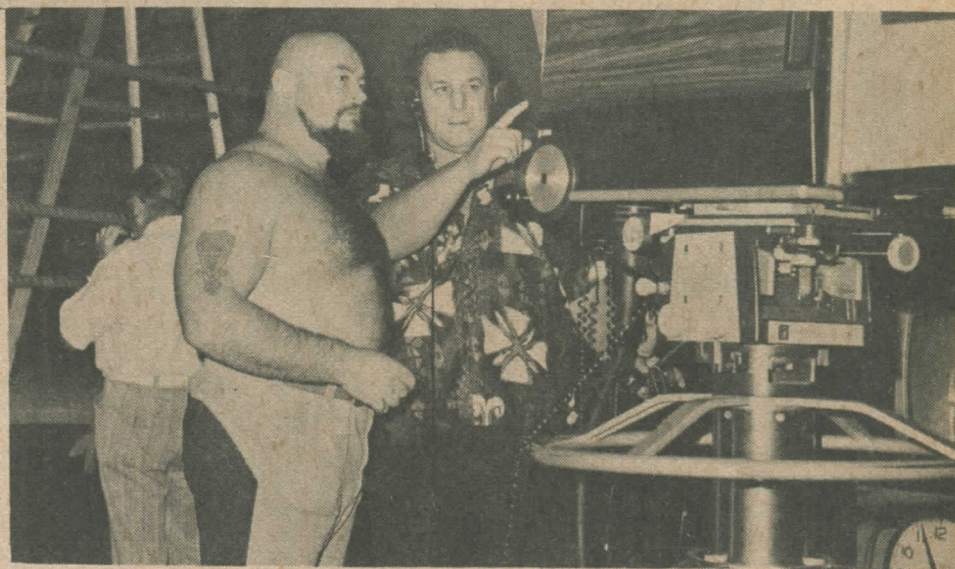


patient as soon
5. Inject intracardiac
6. Look for return
and movement
7. Take ECG to det
fibrillation. Apply
8. Perform venous
tration of drugs
myocardial irrita



Crusher is the locker room comedian and can always be counted on to provide a few chuckles. Here he greets an old buddy, Bill Watts, with an example of what he thinks a cowboy should look like. Of course, that's Bill's jacket Crusher's using.

Ivan Koloff has one of the most brilliant minds in wrestling and he's always trying to learn something new. Manager Big K shows him how a TV camera works. Ivan doesn't like waiting in dressing rooms, so he can usually be found prowling around somewhere to relieve his anxiety.



ped the Demon—without his mask—we almost wound up with a broken camera.

Demon prepares for a match by doing pushups. He'll pick a secluded part of the arena (behind a stairwell or a similar place) because he takes off his mask when he does his pushups. He claims it's too sweaty and hot if he leaves it on, a common hazard for masked wrestlers.

As a result, he wasn't too happy when we snapped his picture without the mask.

"You've got a lot of nerve taking a picture of the Great Black Demon without his mask!" he roared. "Don't you know I have to protect my identity? The world would love to know my secret."

The Demon claims he is always in training and that it's nothing for

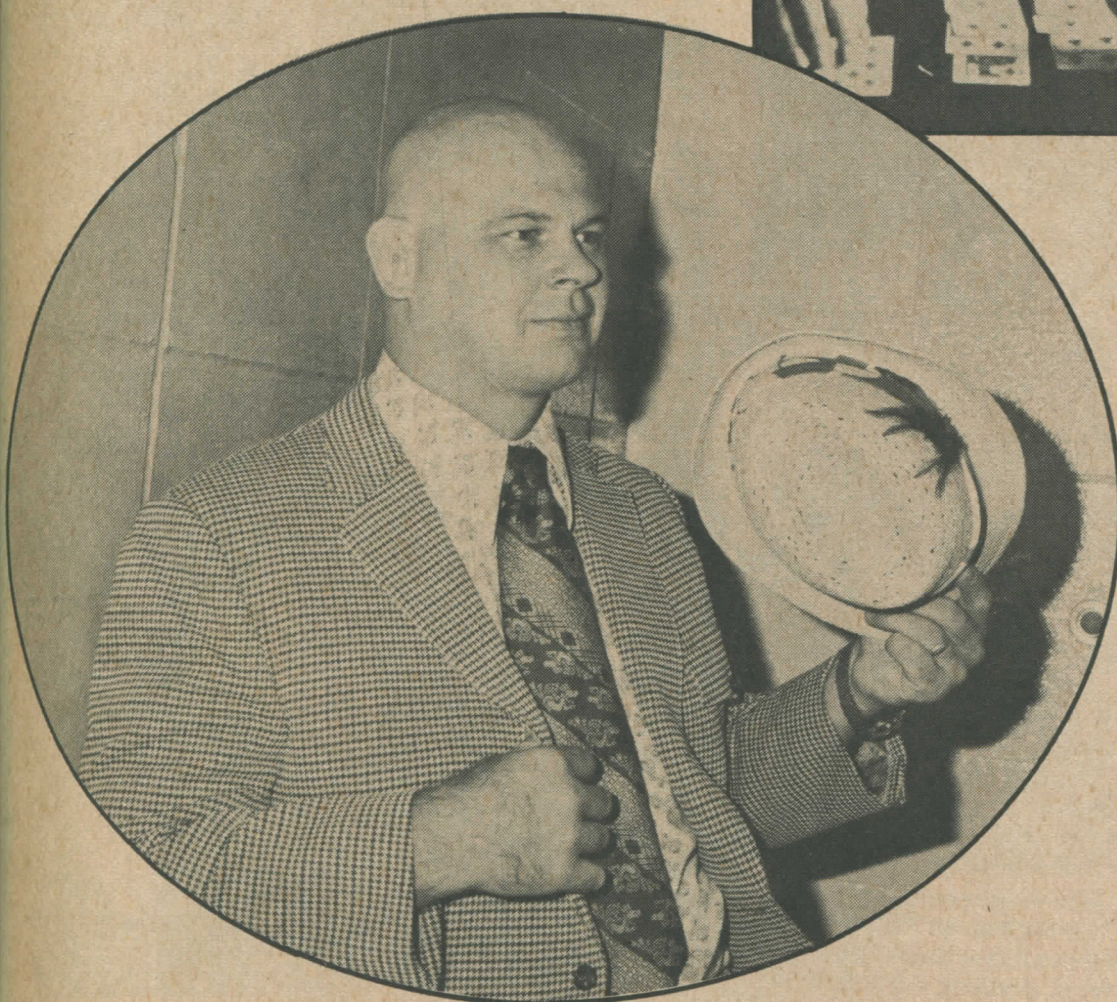
him to suddenly drop to the floor and do 300 pushups whenever he feels like it.

"That's what makes me so great," he continued. "I have it all. I have everything. Ability, agility, maneuverability, backward movement, forward movement, the guts of a lion, the brains of 10 quarterbacks, the power of 10 fullbacks... all this, plus a handsome face and a

**Only our expert
photographers can
capture your heroes—
and villains—
in such off-guard
moments as these . . .**



We never heard of putting a five of diamonds on a jack of diamonds like Donna Christenello's doing (above), but she insists it's a form of solitaire. Since Donna's the resident card expert—we won't argue. Left: Who is that dapper gentleman? Why it's none other than Baron Von Raschke. Fritz can't stand it if anyone messes with his clothes so he wears them until the last moment.



fantastic computer brain! That's the GREAT Black Demon. And do you think I came by these sterling qualities accidentally? Not on your life!"

Pedro Morales passes the time before a match by reading. He'll read anything he can get his hands on. "That guy," said Chief Jay Strongbow, "would read soup can labels if there was nothing else to

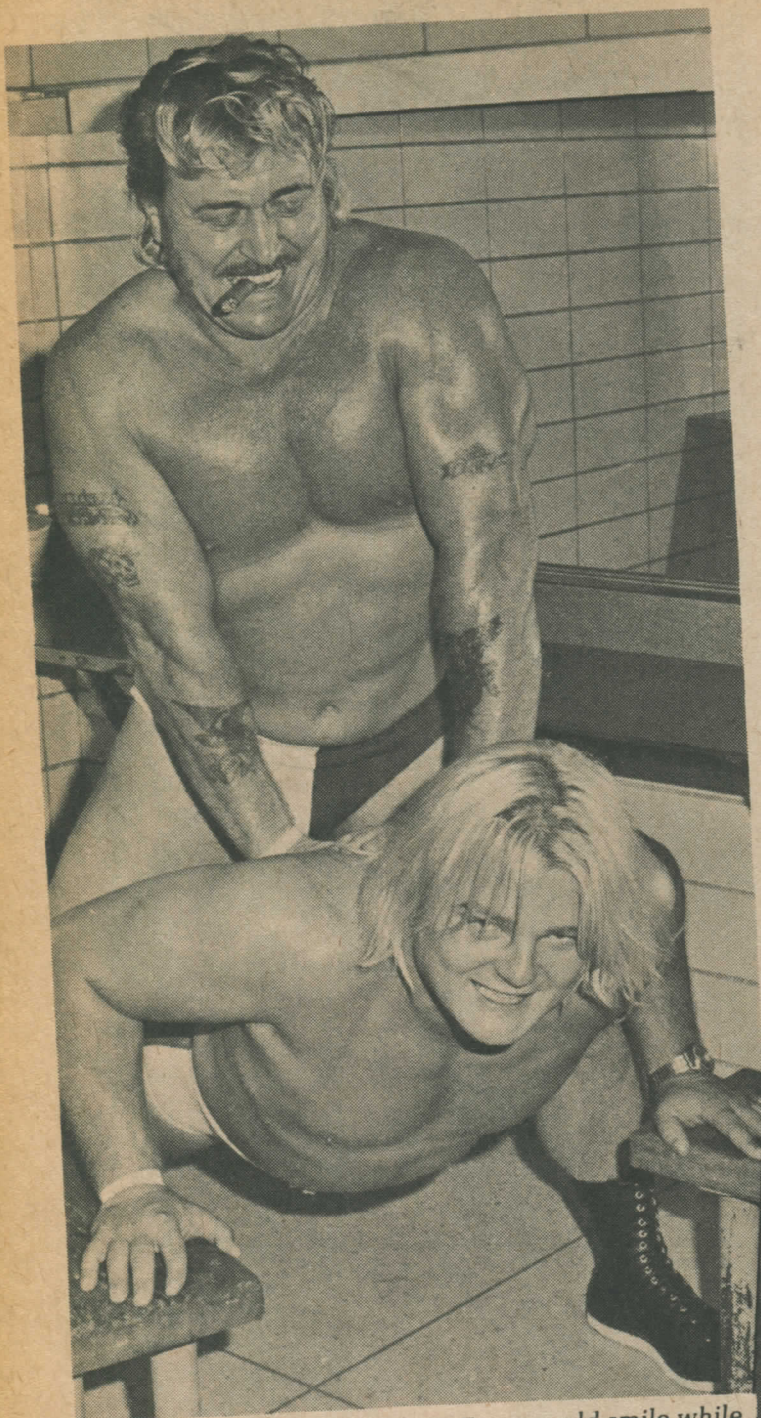
read." Pedro's favorite reading material is, of course, wrestling magazines. And whenever one of the wrestlers wants something to read he usually goes to Morales who, at any given time, has at least a half dozen magazines in his suitcase.

The Miller Brothers are also readers but different kinds of readers. "We're map nuts," explained Bill after our man shot a picture of them

poring over maps.

"Whenever possible we try to drive to our engagements," Dan continued. "We both like driving 'cause that's really the only way you can see the country. So we spend hours planning routes. We both enjoy looking at maps and the few hours before a match gives us a good opportunity to do it."

Ivan Koloff is one wrestler who



Only a man as strong as John Fargo could smile while doing pushups with big brother Don on his back. It's all part of their pre-match ritual, but the famous Fargo brothers will interrupt anything if it means getting their pictures in a magazine. They're hams!

spends as little time as possible in the dressing room. "He's the most nervous and inquisitive man I ever met," noted his manager, the Big K. "He wants to find out about everything. He's already learned how to operate a TV camera and he wants to learn how to run a videotape machine. He's got a lot of nervous energy and just can't sit in a locker

room before a match. He likes to wander all over the place."

Crusher is one of the breed of dressing room comedians who breaks the tension by always being good for a laugh. Crusher's favorite pastime is mimicking other wrestlers and wearing crazy outfits. And he's never without his cigar.

As loud and fun-loving as Crush-

"I know that when the match is over the referee's going to be holding my hand in the air," says Paul Jones, "so I make sure I always look like the winner that I am." That's why it's not too difficult to catch Paul in front of a mirror combing his hair.



er is, Baron Fritz Von Raschke is his equal in the other direction. Von Raschke will find a corner of the room, as far away from other wrestlers as possible, and just sit there and stare straight ahead, as if in a trance.

Von Raschke is very touchy about his clothes. He's a sharp dresser and will spend minute af-



Ah, the spirit of cooperation! Above: Bulldog Brower gives Lord Layton a friendly message. Layton later returned the favor. Left: Trying out new contact lenses is the way Nick Bockwinkle spends most of his dressing room hours.

in a strange ritual of John doing pushups on benches while Don sat on his back pushing his shoulders down.

"This is a very difficult exercise," John explained, "and only someone with my strength can do it. It's great for the back and shoulder muscles and after 10 minutes of doing this I'm loose and ready to tear it up!"

Nick Bockwinkle rarely has time for anything in the way of a pre-bout warmup because he's always busy either putting in or taking out his brand new contact lenses. "I've been wearing lenses for almost 10 years," Nick said, "and I still can't get used to the things."

"Don't believe him," Ray Stevens yelled over. "He just likes to look at himself in the mirror so he plays with those lenses!" □

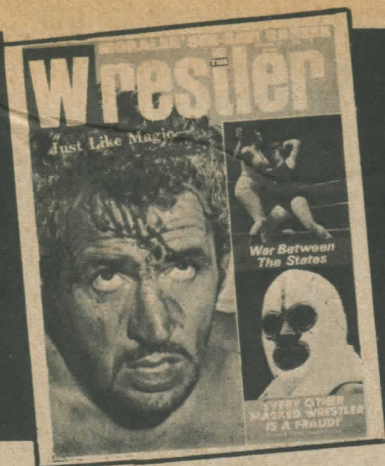
ter minute brushing out wrinkles in his jacket or suit. And if anybody goes near his locker—watch out!

Among every group of athletes there's a dedicated card player and wrestlers are no exception. But this card sharp is a gal—Donny Christenello—and her game is solitaire.

"I always carry my deck of cards wherever I go," Donna explained,

"because nothing helps me pass the time like solitaire. I usually get to the arena before anyone else and it can get boring before someone I can talk to shows up."

Aside from the Black Demon, the only other wrestlers our prying camera caught exercising were the Fargos. When our lens peeked around a corner they were involved



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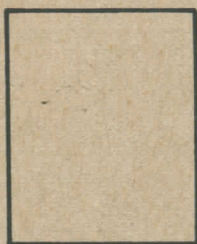
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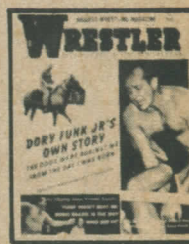
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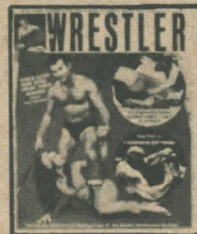
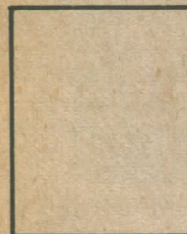
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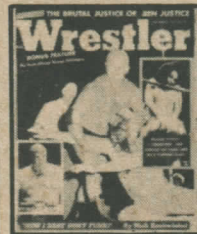
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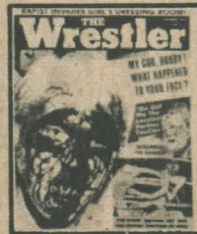
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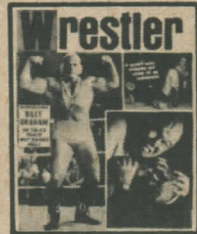
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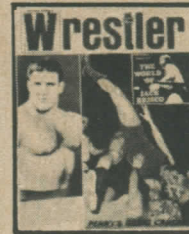
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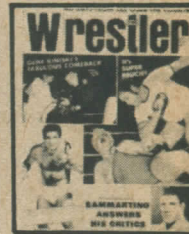
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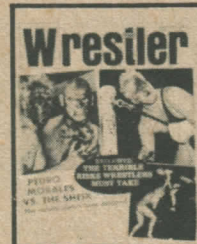
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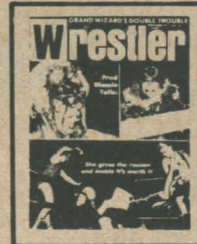
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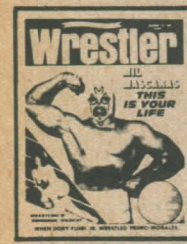
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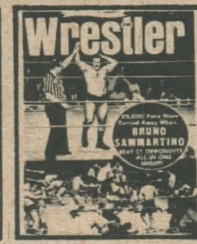
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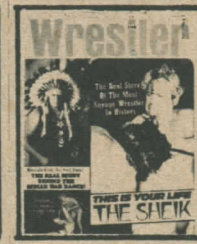
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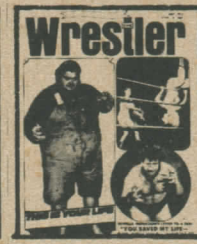
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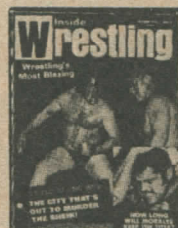
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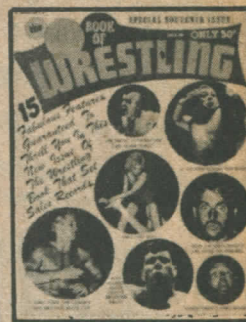
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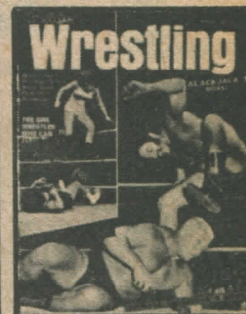
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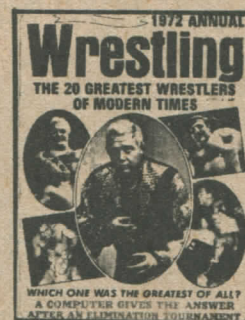
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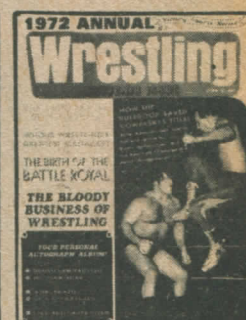
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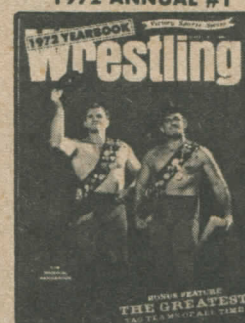
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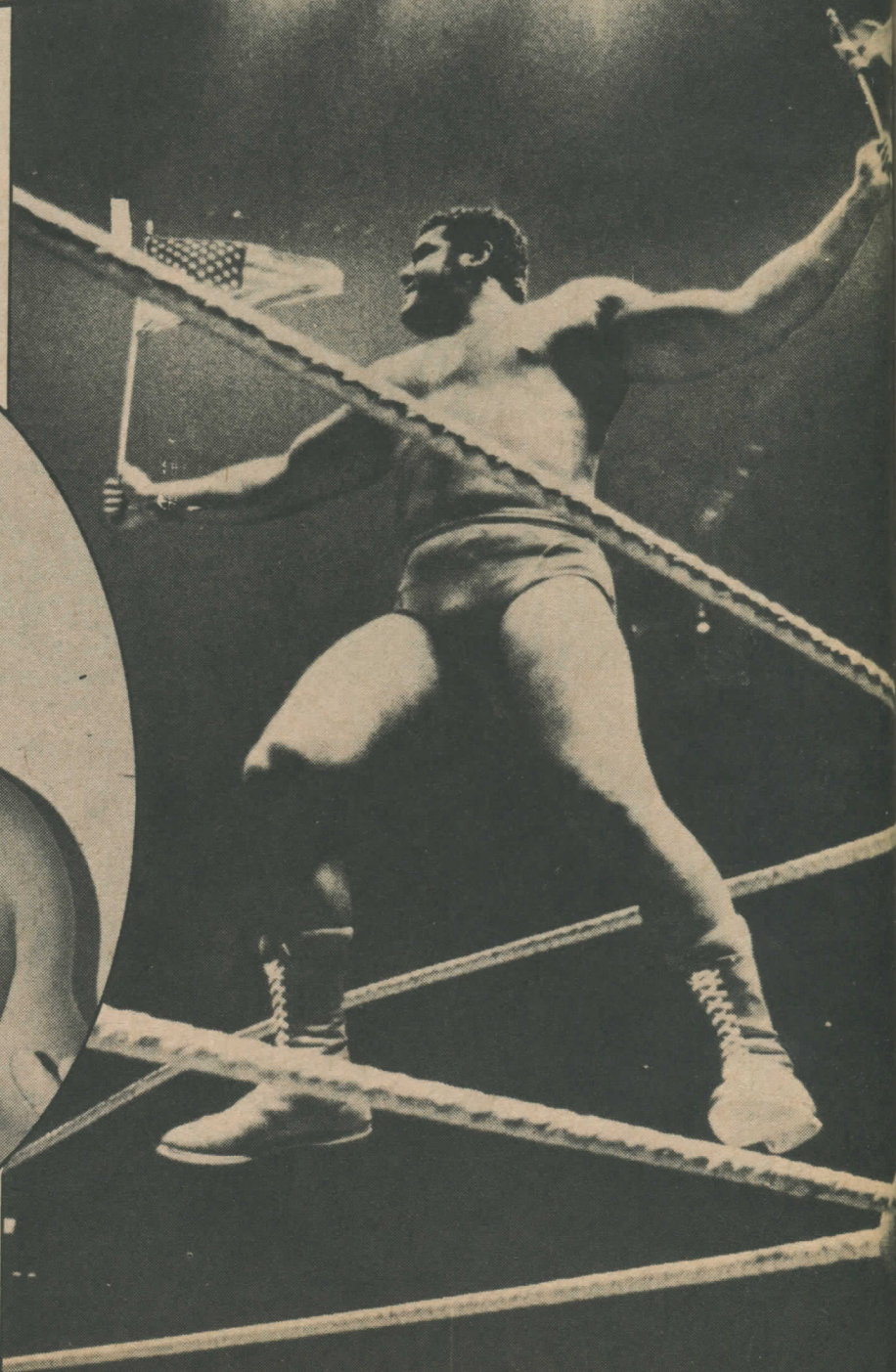
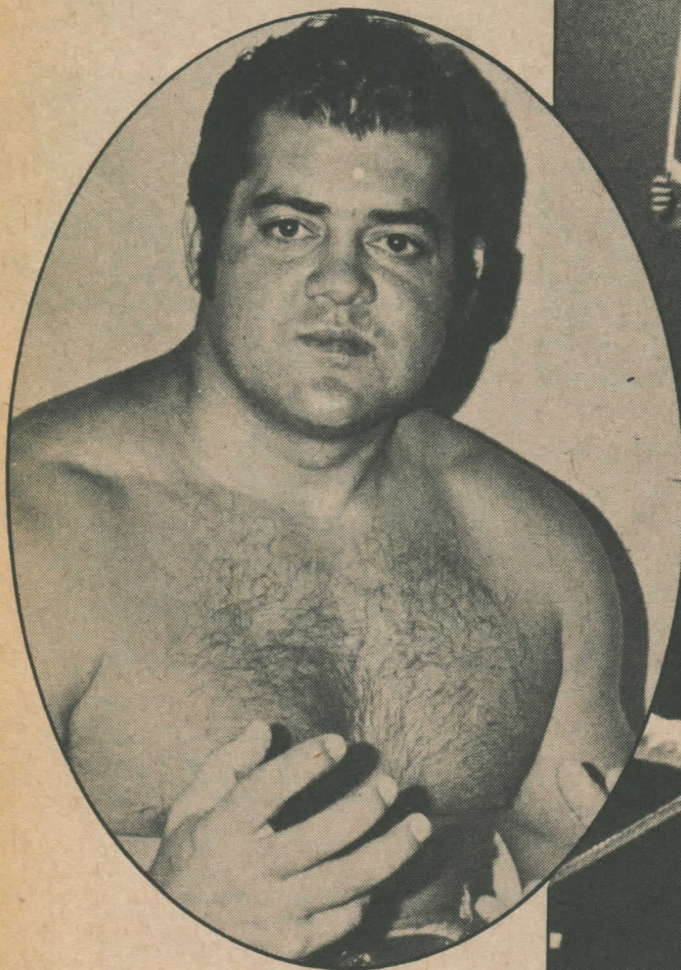
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On a chilly autumn night before more than 20,000 fans, Pedro Morales put an end to the criticism that has been dogging him ever since he became owner of the championship belt many people thought of as "Bruno's belt." And because of Pedro's success in 1972... success which culminated in that dramatic struggle against Bruno Sammartino... our readers have voted...

PEDRO MORALES

Pedro Morales leaps off the ropes while holding the American and Puerto Rican flags after he successfully defended his W.W.W.F. crown against Toru Tanaka.



-WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

HE BEGAN THE year as the champion nobody wanted and ended it as the champion who'd proven himself and won over the very same fans who'd discredited him earlier.

He overcame obstacles no champion ever had to overcome and he was successful. Not only that, he never lost his dignity or humility on the way to that success.

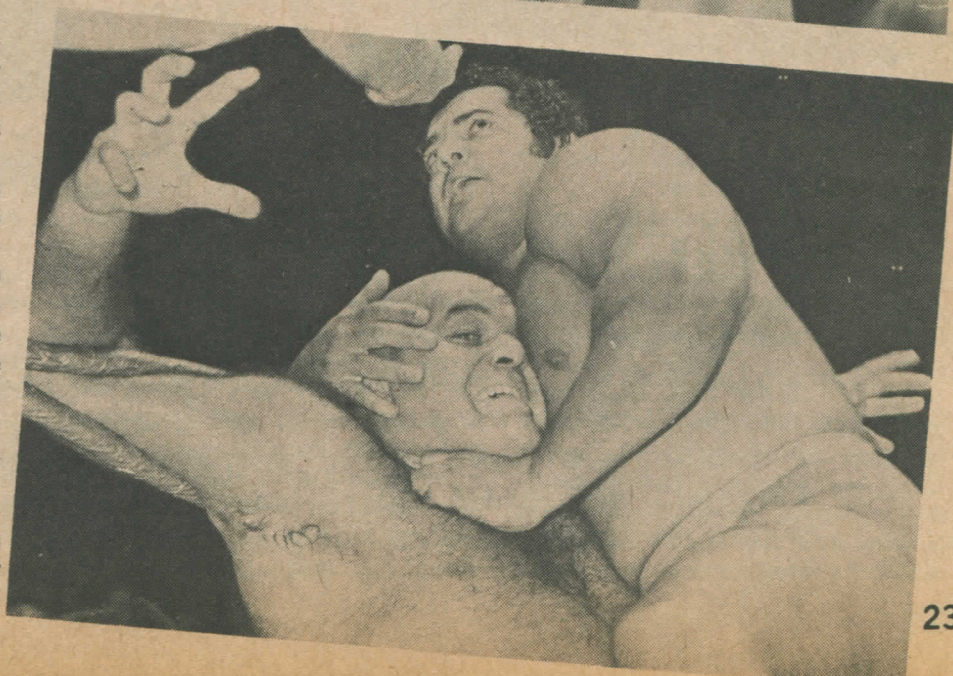
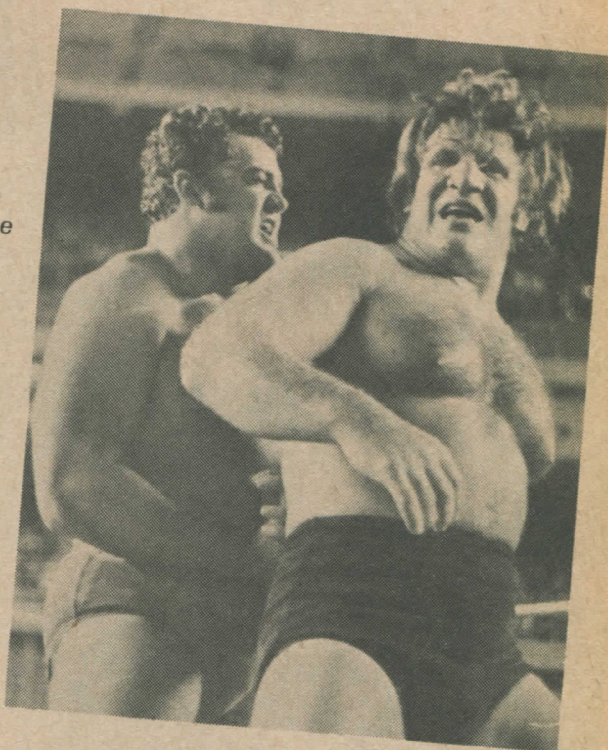
That is why our readers named Pedro Morales as WRESTLER OF THE YEAR for 1972!

Pedro began 1972 just as he ended 1971—in the shadow of his good friend Bruno Sammartino. Pedro was wearing the belt symbolic of the World Wide Wrestling Federation heavyweight championship—a belt many people felt he didn't deserve.

Morales faced many obstacles in 1972. Chief among them was Lou Albano, the cagey and tremendously successful manager who has many a crusade out of his obsession to topple Pedro from the title. Albano sent a total of five wrestlers out to beat Pedro. All five failed. And when that happened—Lou even tried himself. And he, too, got whipped.

Stan Stasiak and his devastating heart punch was Lou's first hope. He gave Morales a number

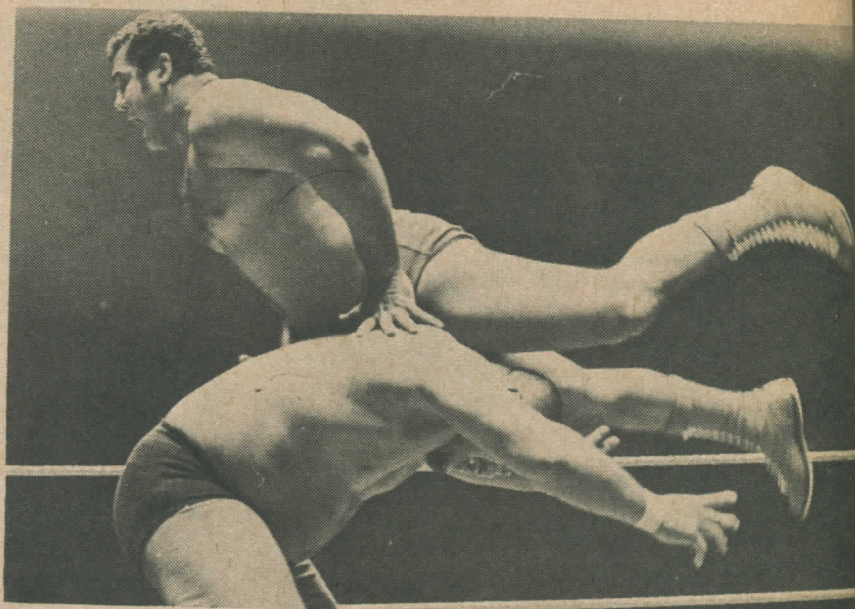
Pedro makes Bruno Sammartino grimace (right) with this hammerlock during their "Match of the Century" in New York's Shea Stadium. Morales proved himself by holding Bruno to a draw. Below: Pedro has George Steele trapped in the ropes during a title contest.



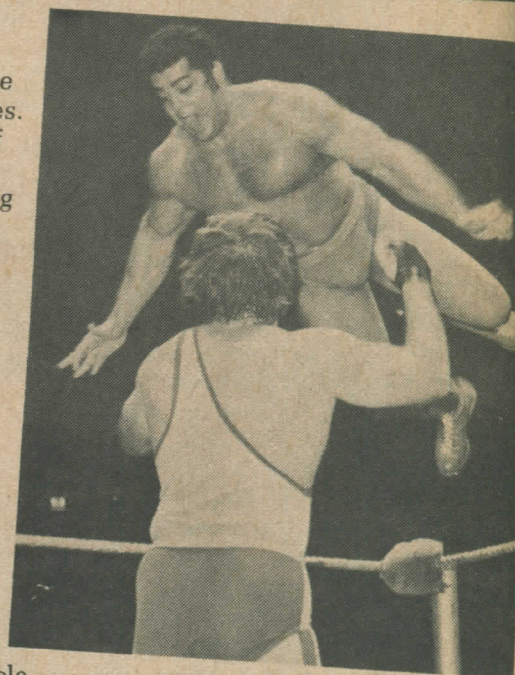
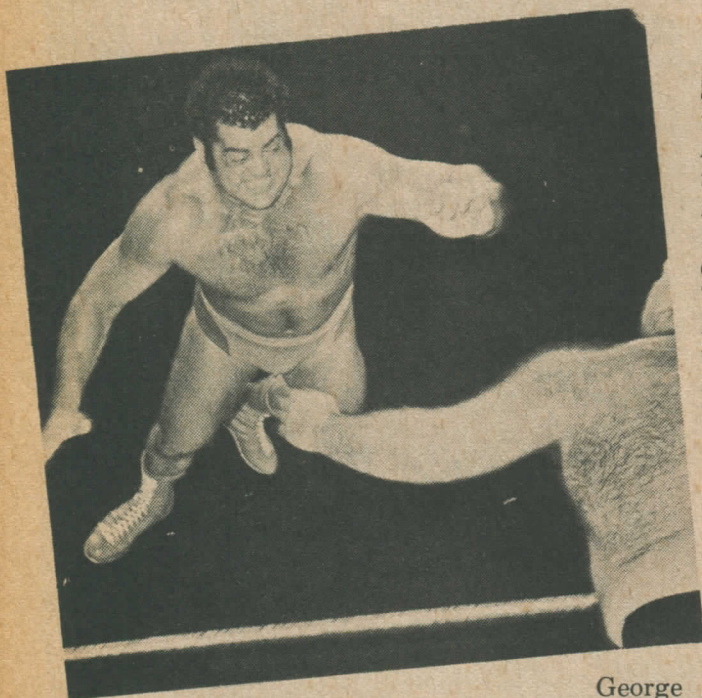


"I LET MY WORK IN THE RING SPEAK FOR ME" — PEDRO MORALES

Keeping his championship hasn't been easy for Morales. He has spilled much blood defending it.



Spectacular! That's the word for Pedro Morales. Above: Pedro dives off the top rope sailing halfway across the ring before landing on challenger Professor Toru Tanaka. Flyin' Pedro gives the same treatment to George Steele (left) and The Spoiler (right).



of close calls. But Stasiak wound up leaving the territory.

Baron Mikel Sicluna had a number of shots at Morales but couldn't succeed. King Curtis, a mentally-deranged Hawaiian whom Albano handled via remote control, returned to Hawaii without the belt.

Morales turned back other challengers as well. Pampero Firpo, the man who took Bobo Brazil's U.S. heavyweight championship and who gave The Sheik the worst beating he'd ever suffered, was no match for Morales.

George "The Animal" Steele, who gave Bruno Sammartino such a beating a few weeks before Bruno lost his title to Ivan Koloff (Sammartino credits Steele with doing the damage that led to his losing the title), could not take Pedro's crown. Tarzan Tyler, Luke Graham, Freddie Blassie, the Spoiler. One by one they came... took their best shot... and returned empty-handed. Pedro whipped 'em all.

But unlike other champions, Morales could not rest on his laurels. Beating every challenger wasn't enough. Rumors began to circu-

late. "The referees are protecting Pedro Morales," said the rumor-mongers.



Naturally, this cry was picked up by Pedro's beaten opponents. Perhaps they couldn't whip Morales in the ring, but they could sure as hell try to whip him with rumors.

So one by one, each man Morales defeated gave the same story. The referees were protecting Pedro. Was it ever proven? No. But the Pedro-haters didn't want or need



(Continued on page 62)



**Most
Popular**



**Tag
Team
Of The
Year**



**Girl
Wrestler
Of The
Year**

**1972
★ ANNUAL
AWARDS—
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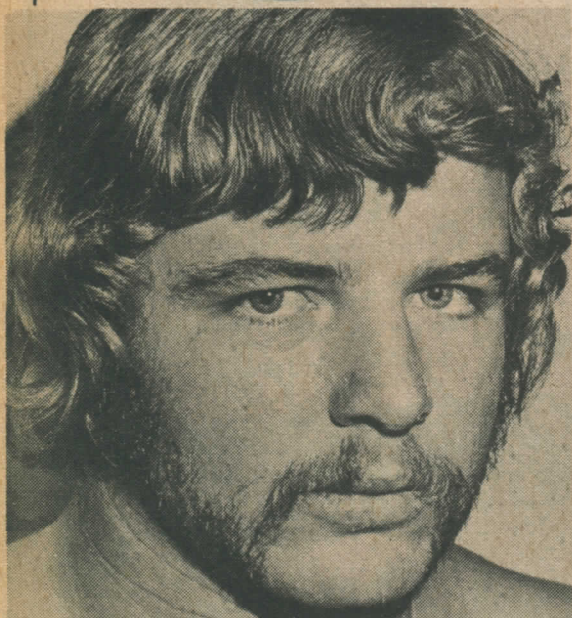
**Manager
Of The
Year**

**and
many
others!**

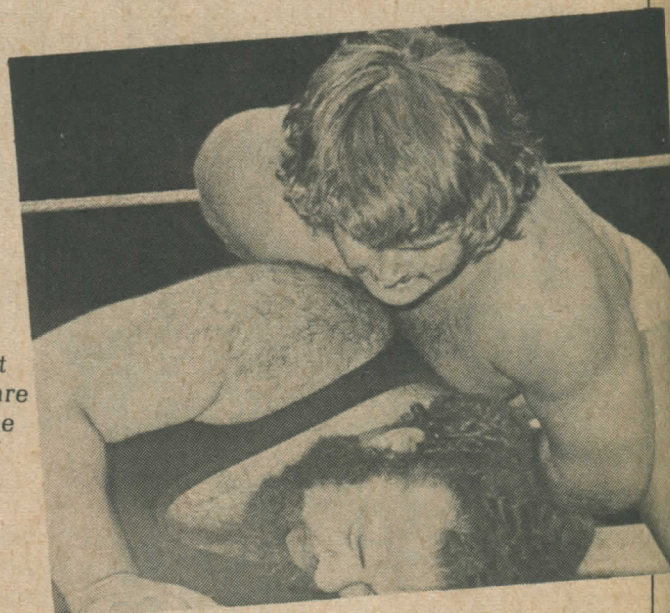
For the first time ever, the editors of **INSIDE WRESTLING** and **THE WRESTLER** decided to let you pick the winners of the annual awards. Most of the contests were close and we can't really disagree with any of the choices. The "Wrestler of the Year" and "Match of the Year" appear in separate stories in this issue. But here are the other winners of the annual awards—as you picked them!

MIKE GRAHAM

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR



Mike Graham has Juan Caruso at his mercy as Mike made his very successful debut in Madison Square Garden under the watchful eyes of his famous dad, Eddie Graham.



ONE OF THE most difficult roles in any person's life is being the son of a famous sports figure. It is a role Mike Graham was born into and a role he has handled very well.

Son of the great Eddie Graham, one of the most popular wrestlers in Florida, it was expected Mike would follow in his father's footsteps. He could have, if he wanted to, gotten by on his father's reputation. But Mike didn't choose to go that way.

"I wanted to succeed because I'm a good wrestler and not because I'm Eddie Graham's son," Mike said. It was something he knew as a youngster. So at the tender age of nine he went about developing his future.

"I started wrestling at that age and was fortunate enough to be the A.A.U. wrestling champion in Florida five times in different weight classes," Mike noted. "In that kind of competition it doesn't make a difference who your father is."

With that kind of background, it's no wonder Mike became an

immediate smash in his first year as a professional. Beginning in his native Florida, Mike swept through such competition as Redbeard, Taurus, Zodiac, Joe Nova and former southern heavyweight champion Bobby Shane. He came to Madison Square Garden, and in front of the largest crowd ever to see him, he subdued cagey veteran Juan Caruso with a spectacular figure-4-leglock.

The night Mike wrestled in New York, all the other wrestlers on the card that evening came out of their dressing rooms to see just how good Eddie's son really was.

"He really impressed me," said veteran star Don Curtis, an excellent judge of talent. "In fact, I recall when Dory Funk Jr. first started wrestling pro and I'd have to say Mike is as far advanced at this stage of the game as Dory Jr. was at an equivalent period."

"He's a helluva prospect," said Chief Jay Strongbow, "and he knows an awful lot for a kid his age. What impressed me was his strength. I knew he was a weightlifter but he's

got more power than I thought."

"Hey, I'm glad he wasn't wrestling me tonight," laughed Manny Soto, "but seriously, he's good. Very good. At his age I couldn't do half of what he can do. He's got a good future."

The majority of Mike's votes came, of course, from the Florida area where he's seen most often. But he also pulled a surprising number of votes from New York, where he appeared only once.

Mike is 5-9 and weighs 230 pounds. An all-around athlete, he drives race cars, skin dives and is quite adept at hunting and deep-sea fishing. A former high school football star, Mike took up weightlifting and is a former state champion in the 198-pound class. He still holds the Florida record for the bench press and was the state champion powerlifter.

Can Mike go all the way to the top like Dory Sr.'s son did? "I don't see why not," says proud father Eddie.

Either, evidently, do the fans. By voting him Rookie of the Year they've sent him off to a heck of a good start! □

BRUISER & CRUSHER

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

THE TRULY GREAT tag teams are usually people who've made a career of tag team wrestling and have suppressed individual abilities for the good of the team. Such great teams as the Fabulous Kangaroos, the Chain Gang, the Von Brauners and the Assassins are examples.

But the Tag Team of the Year for 1972 is an exception to that rule. Because Bruiser and Crusher are two men who are great individual stars in addition to being parts of a terrific combination.

Cousins, Bruiser and Crusher have wrestled as a team on and off for a good number of years. But it wasn't until 1972 that they got together on a full-time basis and concentrated all their energy towards team wrestling. And although each man had already reached enormous success on an individual basis, the success they've enjoyed as a full-time team goes beyond any and all previous successes.

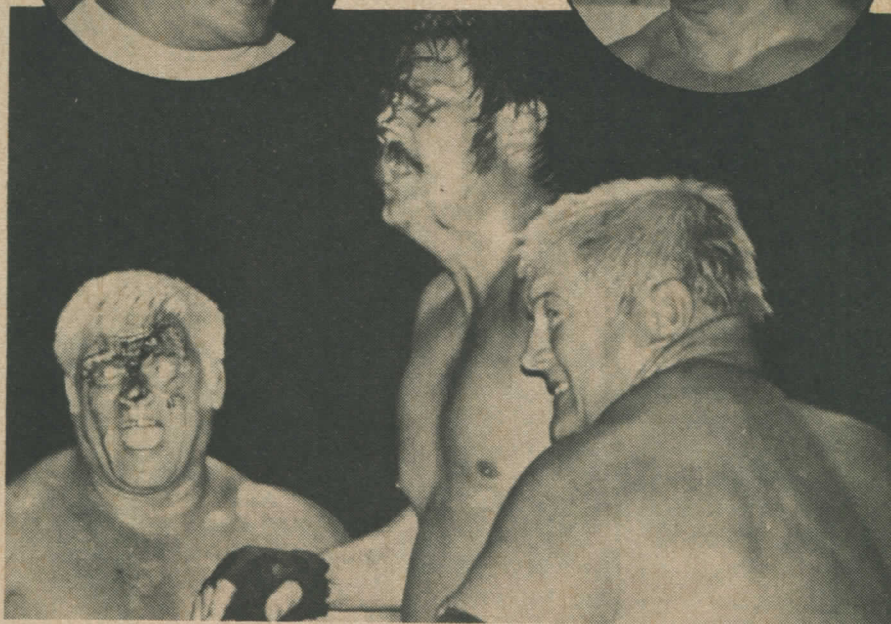
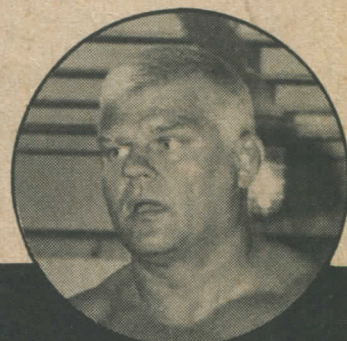
How good are Bruiser and Crusher? One example is the number of votes they received. This was the only contest on the ballot which was an absolute runaway. Nobody came close. And although most of the votes came from Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio, this team received votes from all over the country!

The unique thing about Bruiser and Crusher is that they did not meet a wide range of competition. One reason, of course, is that there aren't too many opponents brave enough to tangle with them. But the Blackjacks and manager Bobby Heenan were brave enough and it was against this combination Bruiser and Crusher achieved their greatest triumphs.

"We get pleasure seeing that crew covered with their own blood," Bruiser laughed. "Watching their frustrations," added Crusher, "has



Bruiser (left) and Crusher (right) made 1972 a bad year for the Blackjacks (below).



been the highlight of my year."

Of course, not every match has seen Bruiser and Crusher go against the Blackjacks. They topped Heenan and Baron Von Raschke, the rugged Vachons and the Graduates to name just a few other teams.

Uniquely, Bruiser and Crusher have done something long considered just about impossible in tag team wrestling. They are persons with enormous individual talent who've channeled that talent into devastating teamwork. They feel it's their most important plus.

"Teamwork isn't something you can work out overnight," Crusher said. "It has to be handled slowly and thoughtfully. Many wrestlers are afraid their individuality will be lost if they concentrate on teamwork. Bruiser and I know how good

we are as individual wrestlers and so does everyone else. We're established stars. That's why we work so well together. There's no conflict."

Both Bruiser and Crusher were once hated by fans. Now those same fans have made them Tag Team of the Year. Do they find that strange?

"Not really," replied Bruiser. "The fans realize truly great wrestlers. Whether you like a man or hate him you can still respect his ability. Although it is nice to be popular."

"The fans won't regret their choice," Crusher added. "This year we'll be even better. No reason why we can't win this thing two years in a row. The only people who might object to that are Heenan and his Blackjacks—and we know how to handle them!"



MARIA LAVERNE

GIRL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

MARIA LAVERNE IS the Woman Wrestler of the Year of this or any other year," wrote one man on his ballot. A lot of other men evidently agreed.

In one of the closest of all the contests, Maria's triumph was due largely to the men. More than 90 percent of her votes came from males, leading us to believe Maria's good looks didn't hurt her chances at the ballot box!

But many of her Texas supporters, from where she got her greatest number of votes, pointed out that although Maria's a beautiful gal—she's also one hell of a wrestler!

That she is.

Despite a reluctance to leave her adopted home state, Maria climbed high in the ratings. She annexed the Texas State Women's title and in a pair of absolutely sensational matches she whipped two of the best gals around—Ann Casey and Betty Niccoli!

Interestingly enough, Maria's closest competitor in the balloting was her one-time rival but now close friend Vivian Vachon. And Vivian sounded as happy about the outcome as if she'd won it herself.

"Maria is an excellent choice," she said over the phone, "and I know how thrilled she'll be when she finds out. I'm glad she's finally getting the recognition she deserves. She's worked very hard and I couldn't be happier."

Maria's ring style is quite a bit like the gal who won the award the previous year, Vicki Williams. Both rely on speed and flying maneuvers and both possess devastating dropkicks. The only real difference between them is that while Vicki is strictly a scientific grappler—Maria is not averse to hauling off and slugging her opponent when the occasion demands it. She can be a rough customer!



Beautiful Maria Laverne (above) received a ton of votes from men, but many noted they cast ballots because of her wrestling skill as well as her looks. Right: Maria tests her strength against former rival and Vivian Vachon.

Maria has been wrestling for only a few years, but in that short span of time she's seen her career take a meteoric rise. And since she was always good-looking, she can rightfully credit her increased stature and popularity to a great improvement in ability.

"I've been working harder than ever for the past two years," Maria told us, "and I can't tell you how happy I am that the fans have recognized my improvement. When you consider how many great girl wrestlers there

are—something like this is really an honor for me. I appreciate it."

As we said, most of Maria's support came from Texas. But a ballot from one California fan who voted for her summed up the esteem in which she's held. "I never saw Maria Laverne wrestle," the voter wrote, "but I have seen Ann Casey. And anybody who can defeat Ann Casey has got to be the best there is."

And as far as the fans are concerned—Maria Laverne is the best there is! □

THE SHEIK

VILLAIN OF THE YEAR



OF ALL THE annual awards, there's one many wrestlers do not consider an honor to win. Because when you're the Villain of the Year it means you're the most hated, most despised, most ruthless and often most disgusting of all men.

More than anyone else, The Sheik fits the above description, and that obviously is why the Arab maniac received more ballots for this dubious distinction than any other wrestler.

What makes a Villain of the Year?

Well, in order to win the distinction, The Sheik, among other things, just about destroyed last year's Villain of the Year, John Tolos, in a series of brutal matches.

He attacked promoter Mike Lebell and two referees.

He attacked fans in Texas, California and a few other cities.

He maimed opponents throughout the nation.

The Sheik is truly a national figure. He received votes from California, Florida, Montreal, Texas and Detroit among others. But most of all he received votes from Toronto, the

Actions like this (right) show why fans voted The Sheik "Wrestler of the Year."

city in which he remains unbeaten in almost four years.

One reason The Sheik received so many votes is his use of foreign objects. No other wrestler of modern times has resorted to this underhanded way of injuring opponents as has the Arab. He's used pencils, knives, razor blades, pieces of metal, tables, chairs, microphones and you name it. He's probably the single most vicious individual in the sport's history.

Yet 1972 was probably one of the most frustrating years The Sheik ever had. He wound up receiving what he usually dishes out when Pampero Firpo tore him apart in a match in Toronto. Bobo Brazil, to whom he lost his U.S. title, refused to give him a rematch. And then to top it off, Brazil lost the title to the one man The Sheik fears, Firpo!

Yet The Sheik compiled an impres-



sive list of victims during 1972. Such stars as Tony Marino, Lord Layton, Tex McKenzie, Carlos Rocha, Dory Funk Sr., John Tolos and Tim Woods felt what it was like to face this maniac.

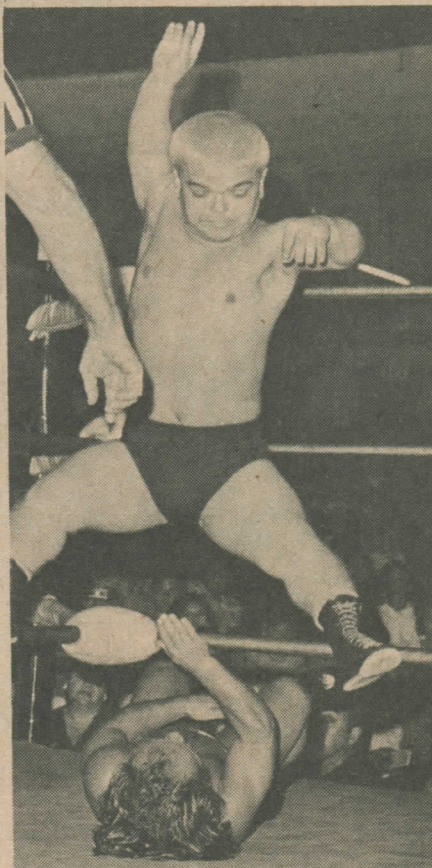
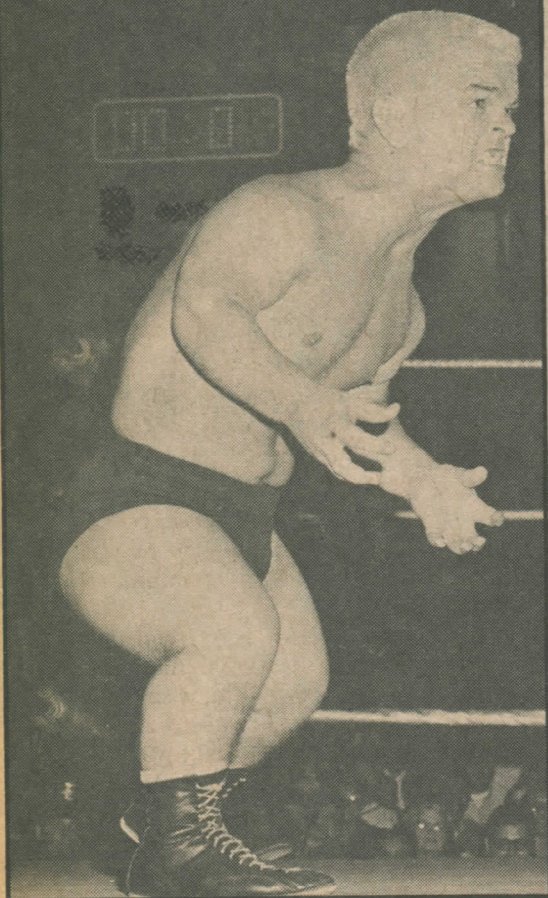
But if there was one night that summed up why Sheik was voted Villain of the Year it had to be the night he took apart John Tolos in Los Angeles. Tolos never received a beating like it and is still recovering from injuries suffered in that match. And after almost killing John, Sheik sent two referees to the hospital and tried to kill the promoter.

Abdullah Farouk, The Sheik's manager, expressed no surprise when told his man won as top villain. "Was there ever any doubt?" he retorted. "And I can guarantee you The Sheik will be even wilder in 1973."

Even for The Sheik—that hardly seems possible!

LITTLE BRUISER

MIDGET WRESTLER OF THE YEAR



Little Bruiser lands on Lord Littlebrook and sends him to the hospital. Despite such punishing tactics, Little Bruiser remains one of North America's most popular midget wrestlers. He's also one of its most courageous athletes.

ponents. They're not too crazy about him. Lord Littlebrook, for example, just got out of the hospital after an hour-long bout in which little Bruiser knocked him senseless. Yet Little Bruiser bears no ill will towards Littlebrook. "I consider him a fine wrestler and still do," he said, "but that doesn't mean I'm not going to try to bash his brains in when I get him in the ring. I'd feel the same way if he'd done it to me."

Does he regret using illegal tactics?

"No," he replied. "Nobody ever asks you *how* you won, they only ask *if* you won. I always win."

Most people are familiar with Bruiser's story and how he got into wrestling when he discovered he looked just like big Bruiser. For awhile there was a falling out between the two but they are once again friends. Yet Little Bruiser never relied on big Bruiser to build his own reputation. That was built on sheer ability and a willingness to travel all over North America to show what he could do. Those travels have earned him a loyal following and the results showed up in the voting as he outpolled such well-known personalities as Little Beaver, Sky Low Low, Cowboy Lang, Littlebrook and others.

Little Bruiser was genuinely pleased when informed he'd been voted Midget Wrestler of the Year. "It's nice to have the fans recognize your efforts," he said. "I hope you'll thank them for me."

Little Bruiser, you just did. □

HE MAY LOOK small to some people, but those who know him consider Little Bruiser a giant.

"Let me tell you something about him," said big Bruiser, the man who Little Bruiser closely resembles. "Little Bruiser's only little when it comes to feet and inches. He's got a bigger heart and more guts than anybody I ever met twice his size!"

That is true. When it comes to courage Little Bruiser takes a back seat to nobody. When he goes into a mixed match he isn't in there to wrestle only midgets. More often than not he'll go after the biggest guy he can find.

Little Bruiser is somewhat of a puzzle. Despite the fact he uses

illegal tactics, unlike other wrestlers who resort to that, Little Bruiser is not disliked. In fact, he's quite popular with fans and wrestlers alike.

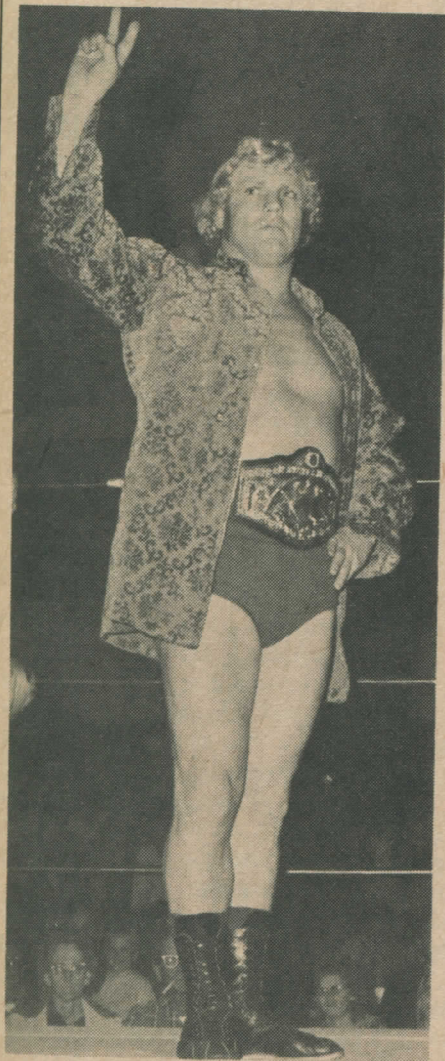
"He's a good man to have as a friend," says Crusher, a man with whom Little Bruiser has teamed, "and I'm proud to say he's my friend. He's the kind of guy you can always count on."

Little Bruiser doesn't really think of himself as being little. He considers himself as good as big Bruiser and happily points out that his friends "come in all shapes and sizes. After all," he adds, "when you're a nice guy like me people can't help but like you."

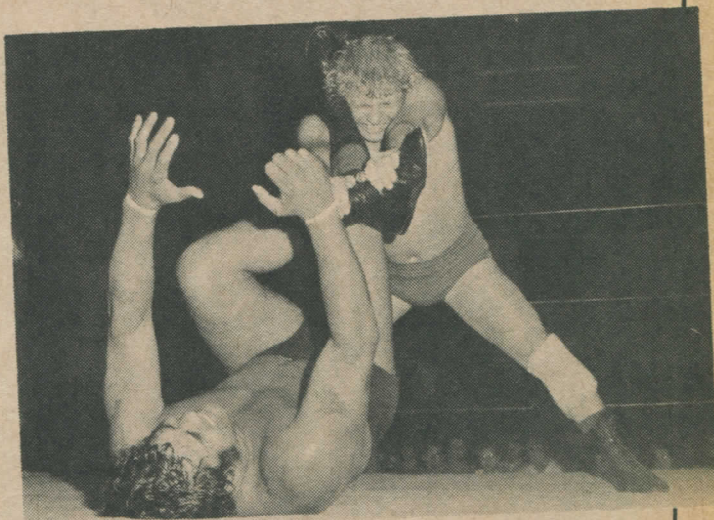
That goes for everyone but his op-

LORD AL HAYS

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR



Popular British star Lord Al Hays (left), the Western States champion, tries to get Ricky Romero in position for his figure-4-leglock (right). Hays made a pair of dramatic comebacks from serious injuries during the year.



Englishman has is guts—in carloads!

Early in the year, Hays' arch enemy, Ciclón Negro, gave Al an absolutely punishing piledriver which twisted his neck muscles and broke his collarbone. That alone should have been enough to stop the match. But Hays was having none of that.

He disguised his injury as best he could so the referee and Negro wouldn't know about it and came back to win the match! He was wrestling, for all intents and purposes, with one arm. "If I'd have known his collarbone was broken I'd have stopped the match right then and there," said the referee later. "He's got guts. He really must have been in pain."

A short time later, even though his injury was not 100 percent healed, Al stepped in against Dory Funk Jr. in a world title match. He could have gotten it postponed. He didn't. He wasn't about to lose his chance. With Funk's busy schedule, who knew when he'd get another title shot?

When Funk threw him out of the ring, Al struck his head on a chair opening a terrible gash. His blood blinded him. The referee wanted to

stop it. Al pleaded to let it go on. It did. And wrestling nearly blind—Lord Al Hays held the champion to a draw!

But it looked like Hays' luck had finally run out during a match in Amarillo. Thousands of fans sat stunned as Hays was loaded into an ambulance after suffering what was first diagnosed as a broken back. He was partially paralyzed.

But again Lord Al Hays came back. The paralysis, caused by a pinched nerve, was only temporary. His back wasn't broken, although five ribs were. He had been bleeding internally and had to undergo surgery.

Three weeks later he was back in the ring defending his Western States championship.

Courage? Lord Al Hays has a ton of it. His motto says it all for him. "If you don't believe you can be stopped—you won't be."

Lord Al Hays has had more than his share of bad breaks—not the least of which was eventually winning the title from Funk but having the result disallowed. But he doesn't believe he can be stopped and he hasn't been. No wonder you voted him Inspirational Wrestler of the Year!

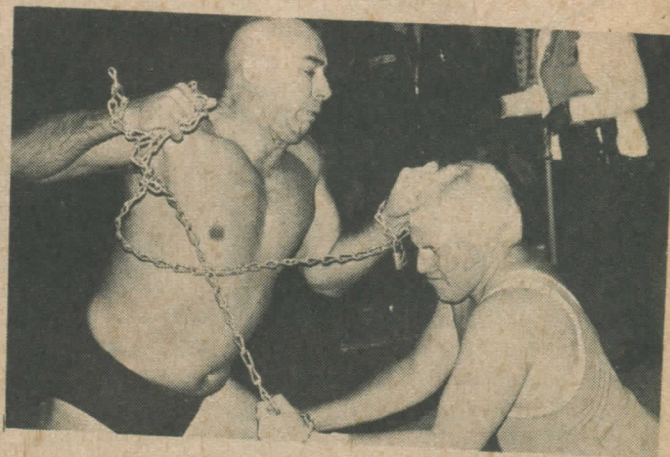
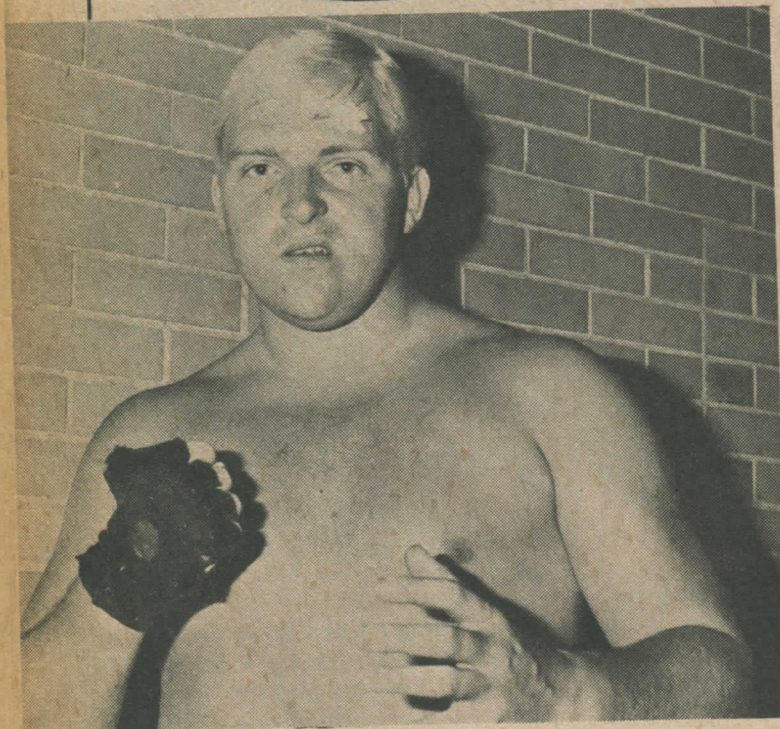
PICKING A MAN as the "Inspirational Wrestler of the Year" is always a most difficult task whether you're a writer, editor or fan.

But when a wrestler performs like Lord Al Hays did during 1972—the task becomes a bit easier.

Hays came back from serious injuries not once but twice during the year, injuries which might have sidelined a lesser man for a longer period of time. But one thing the popular

BOBBY HEENAN

MANAGER OF THE YEAR



Bobby Heenan is belted during a chain match with Billy Red Cloud (above). Heenan (left) is not afraid to face anyone in or out of the ring.

ON THE BACK of an annual awards ballot a young lady wrote "it's hard to vote for Manager of the Year because they all STINK! But since Bobby Heenan doesn't stink as bad as the others I'm voting for him."

That's not the greatest compliment the blond-haired manager ever received, but considering his 1972 escapades it's better than none at all. And enough people thought Heenan "stank" less than other managers to vote him Manager of the Year.

It is a choice with which few fans can argue. Say what you will about Bobby Heenan—he's got guts.

He's one of the few mentors who'll get right in there alongside his men no matter who the opposition may be. And we're not talking about sneak attacks. We're talking about climbing into a set of wrestling togs and being there from the opening

bell until the end... no matter how disastrous the end may be. And Heenan's met some disastrous endings.

Be that as it may, Bobby is the brains behind one of the top tag teams in the sport today—the notorious Blackjacks. He also advises Baron Fritz Von Raschke. His stable is, as he says, "small but select."

"Going with Bobby Heenan was the best thing that ever happened to me," stated Blackjack Mulligan who, until this year, was under contract to the Grand Wizard. "With Bobby's brains and Blackjack Lanza's skill we have won the World Wrestling Association tag team title and we've held the belts for a year without meeting defeat. That's largely due to Bobby."

"The great thing about Heenan," said Lanza, "is that he's not afraid to get dirty, as we say in the gym. He gets right in there and sweats and

trains with you. Because he wrestles so often he knows how a wrestler feels. He's not one of those managers who's always in a suit and never works up a sweat."

Heenan is an exceptional manager. And he'll be the first to say so.

"Take what happened with Baron Von Raschke," Bobby said. "He'd gotten into a slump. He'd even lost to Sailor Art Thomas, of all people. He came to me and asked for help. Within a week I'd spotted what he was doing wrong and suddenly he was winning steadily again. Three weeks after he came to me he was W.W.A. champion again. I am a genius."

Because he is such an active manager, Bobby gets himself injured much more than any other manager. It's not unusual to see his face bloodied after a match. He shrugs it off as part of his job. Other managers wouldn't. "If my men bleed then I bleed," Bobby emphasizes. "I'm no better than they are."

There are things about Heenan many fans don't like, such as when he smuggles foreign objects into the ring. Of course, he denies doing it.

So love him... or hate him... you've picked him as Manager of the Year. It's a good choice. How do we know? He said so himself! □

JACK BRISCO & FRED CURRY (TIE)

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

YOU COULDN'T HAVE a closer race than the one we had for Most Popular Wrestler of the Year. It wound up in a flatfooted tie between flyin' Fred Curry and Jack Brisco!

Neither man's nomination comes as a surprise. Brisco and Curry are indeed two of the most popular wrestlers around.

Both men share similar traits. They go all out to please their fans. No matter what kind of an evening it's been, Jack and Fred will always have a ready smile, a hello, and an autograph ready for their fans.

"I was there the night Jack lost to Paul Jones," wrote one fan, "and a group of us were waiting for him outside the arena. We figured he'd run past us not wanting to say anything. It was a pretty bad night for him. But when he came out he stayed and talked and signed autographs for about 10 minutes. He's a great guy."

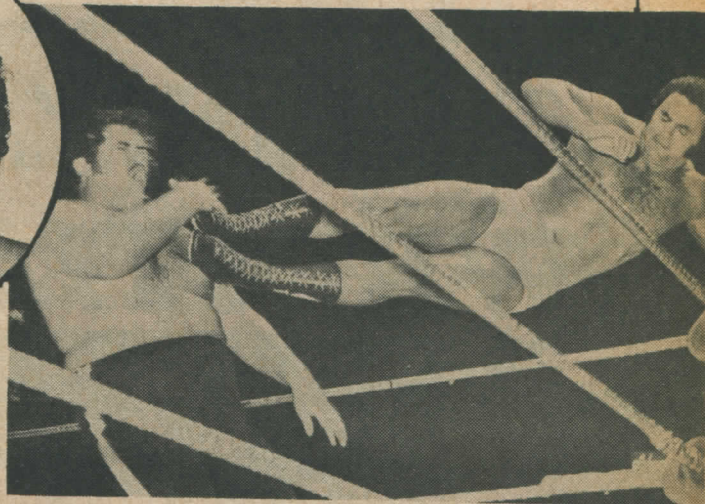
One woman nominated Fred Curry for a similar reason. She wrote that while attending a match at which both Bull and Fred were on the card, she received an injury when a piece of a wooden chair Bull splintered struck her, cutting her leg. Fred found out about it, wrote a note of apology and sent her two tickets to the following week's matches.

Both men wrestle all over North America and both men received votes from just about everywhere. Both were thrilled with the results of the voting.

"It's really an honor to be named most popular and it's certainly wonderful to share that honor with a man like Fred Curry," Jack said. "And I believe your magazines—INSIDE WRESTLING and THE WRESTLER—have a lot to do with it. When I go into a city I've never wrestled in before, the fans already



Fred Curry (above) downs Joe Nova (right) with his patented flying dropkick. Most fans consider "Flyin' Fred" a great guy.



Popular Jack Brisco (above) and Tarzan Tyler battle (below) in Miami Beach, Florida. Jack was "Wrestler of the Year" in 1971.



"I'm very proud of this," Fred Curry stated. "It goes to prove that it doesn't hurt to be nice. Anyone in professional sports has to realize he's in the public eye. The fans play an important part in your career because they pay your salary by attending the matches. I can honestly say I owe a lot to my fans. I'm sure it's the same with Jack. I know he has a very active fan club."

Both men are scientific wrestlers, both are young, both are good looking. All those factors no doubt had an effect on the voting.

"I know both of these men," said promoter Vince McMahon, "and the fans couldn't have made better choices. They're both clean cut, all-American boys and both are fine representatives of our sport. I'm proud to say they've appeared on my cards and hope they will again."

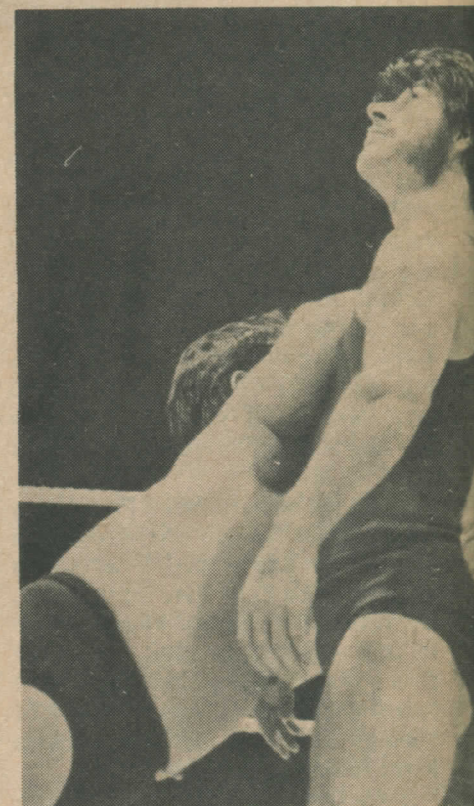
Jack and Fred again enjoyed great success in 1972 although Jack did see his unbeaten streak come to an end. But this contest is the only one based solely on popularity as opposed to skill, and Jack and Fred would probably be equally as popular even if they didn't win as often as they do.

As far as popularity with fans is concerned, Jack Brisco and Fred Curry remain unbeaten!

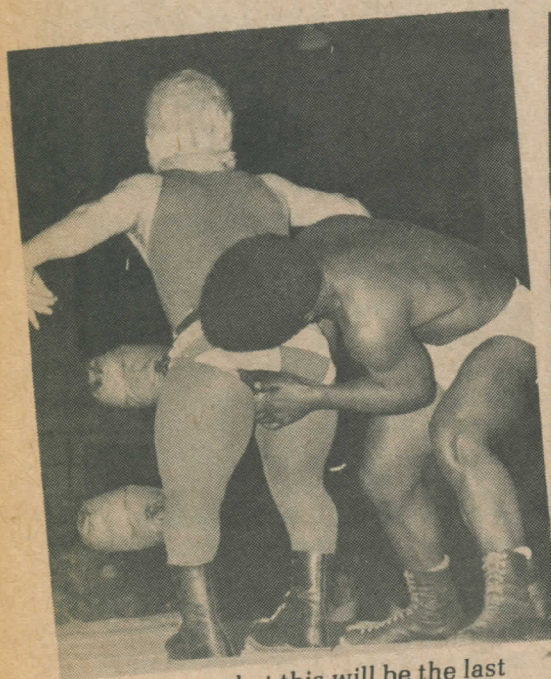


THE LIGHTER SIDE OF WRESTLING

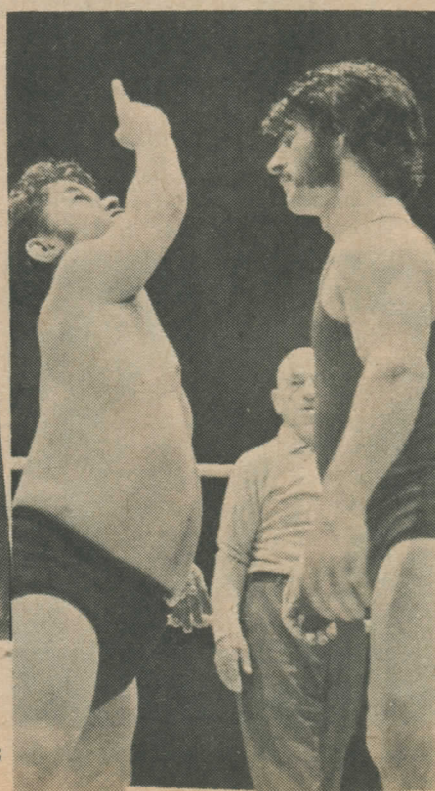
Wrestling is serious business. But it isn't so serious that it can't stop and laugh at itself from time to time. These exclusive pictures capture part of the humorous side of the greatest sport in the world.

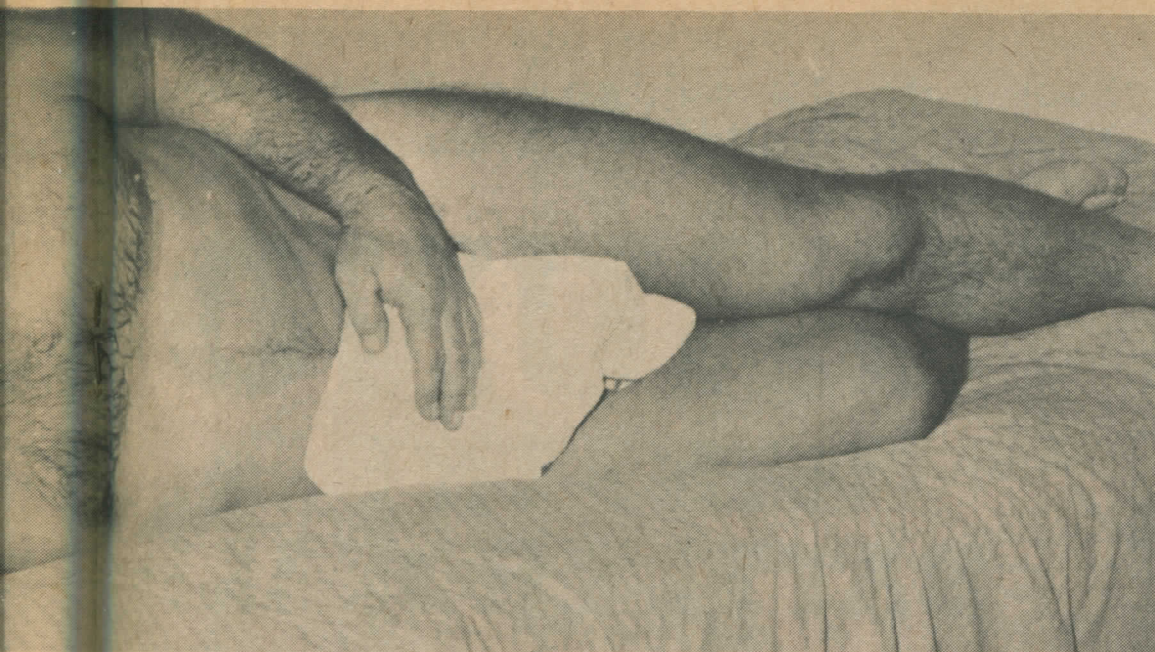


Joey Russel (left) thinks Frenchy Lamont is really going to fall for that old "look up in the air" routine. C'mon Joey, nobody falls for that anymore. Above: Oops! Were we wrong! Frenchy looks up and sure enough—Joey gives him a forearm smash across his chest.



You can bet this will be the last time Wee Willie Wilson will ever turn his back on Bobo Johnson. See, Willie? We told you bad guys always get it in the end!!!





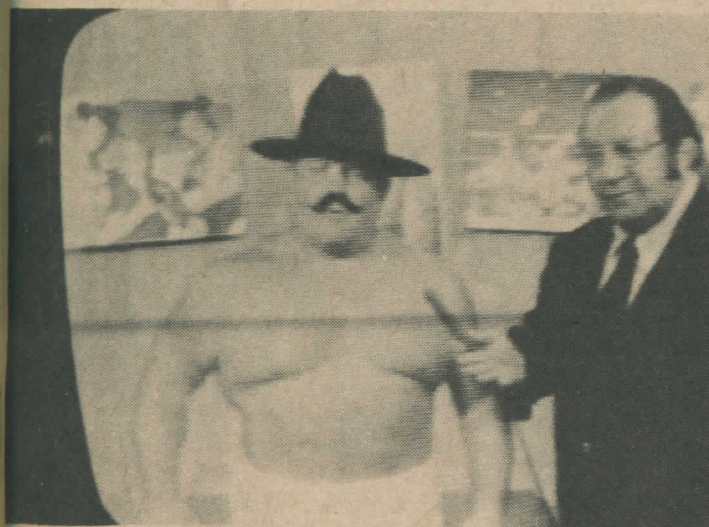
TV and movie star Burt Reynolds created quite a stir when he posed like this for a women's magazine, but ol' Burt has nothing on our own Dr. X. We don't know if popular Dr. X is as sexy as Burt—but he does have the added mysteriousness of his mask. When Dr. X saw this picture he said "I never realized I was so sexy before."



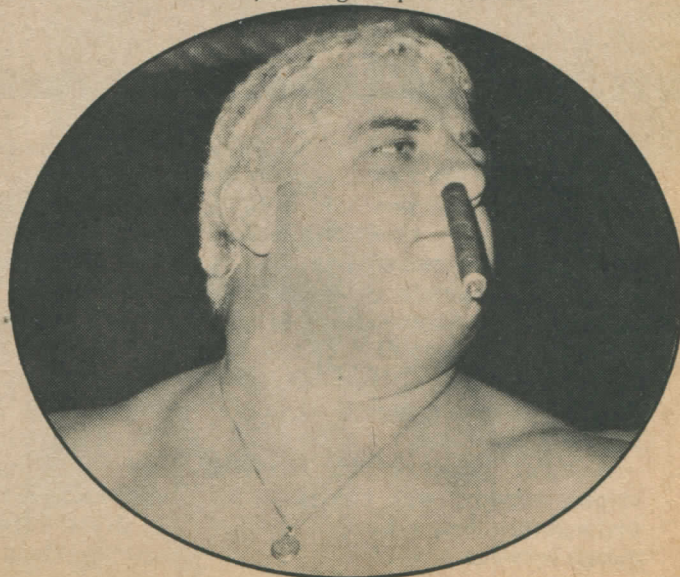
The Destroyer (left) visited the Regis Philbin show, but a good host should make his guest as comfortable as possible. Regis does (right). He dons a mask similar to the Destroyer's, but had no interest in being his tag team partner.



It looks like somebody told Dusty Rhodes to take his cigar and stick it up his nose. So he did! Dusty's arch enemy, Chief Wahoo McDaniel, said Dusty had an excellent idea, but he should have stuck the other end of the cigar up his nose!



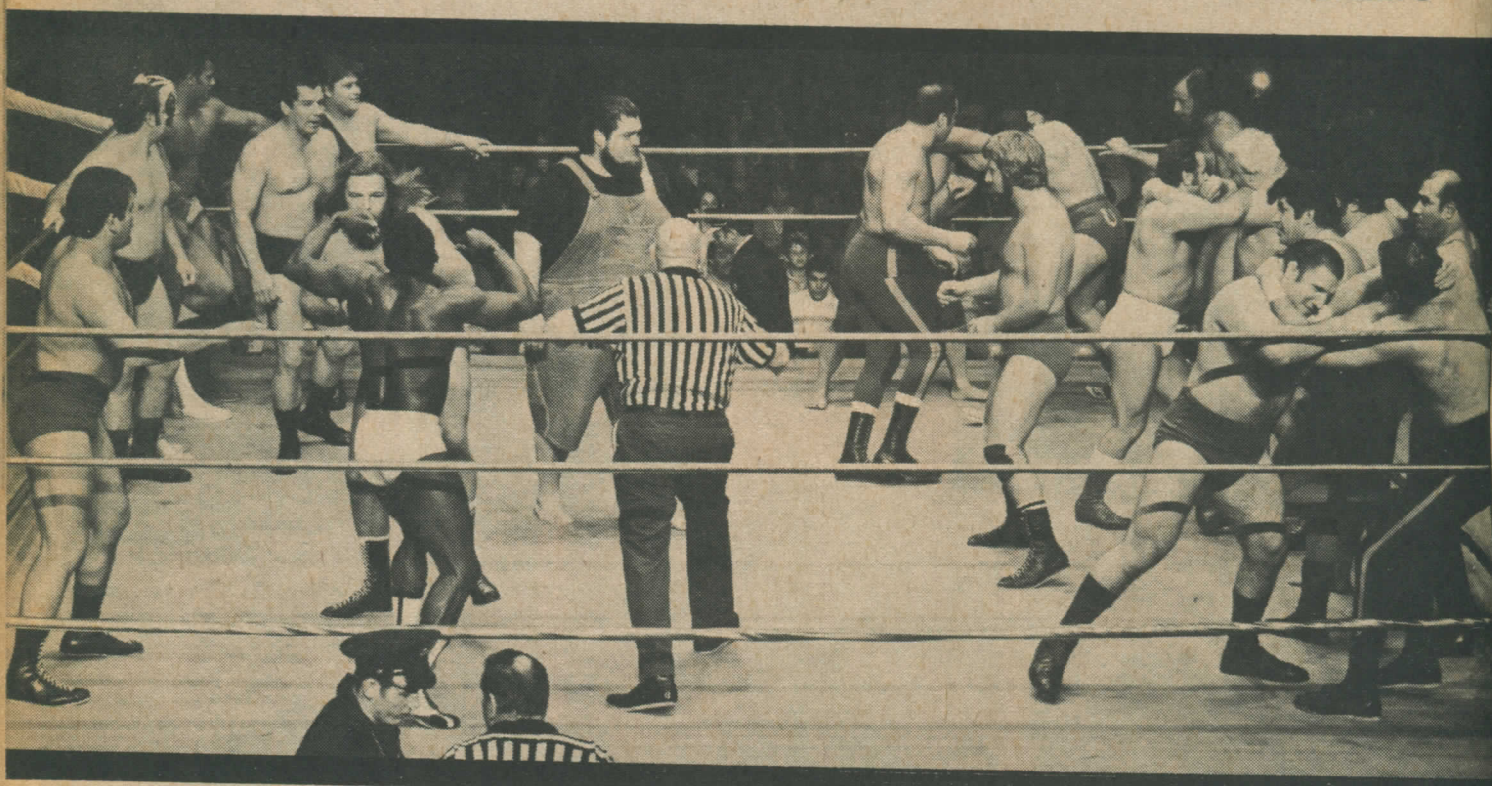
Blackjack Bruiser? That's what it looks like. When correspondent Gary Kamensack spotted Bruiser doing an imitation of Blackjack Lanza while being interviewed on TV by Sam Menacker, he grabbed his camera and took the picture. Lanza didn't think it was a good imitation. "I'm not that fat!" he emphasized.



Fans had a terrible time figuring out which among all the great bouts of 1972 could be classified as the best. But when all the ballots were counted, you decided...

THE
MATCH
OF THE
YEAR:

BRUNO WINS THE BATTLE ROYAL!



IF ANYTHING highlighted 1972 it was the unusually large number of great matches held around the country. And there was lots of support for any one of them.

Who, for example, can forget the one hour and 44-minute marathon bloodbath between Dory Funk Sr. and Cyclone Negro? Not many people did. It was a match which received many votes.

Another brawl which received strong support was the never-to-be-forgotten brass knucks grudge match between Abdullah the Butch-

er and Ernie Ladd as part of the first "Superbowl" of wrestling.

As expected, the tremendous match between Bruno Sammartino and Pedro Morales received lots of support as did the scientific contest between Verne Gagne and Edouard Carpentier.

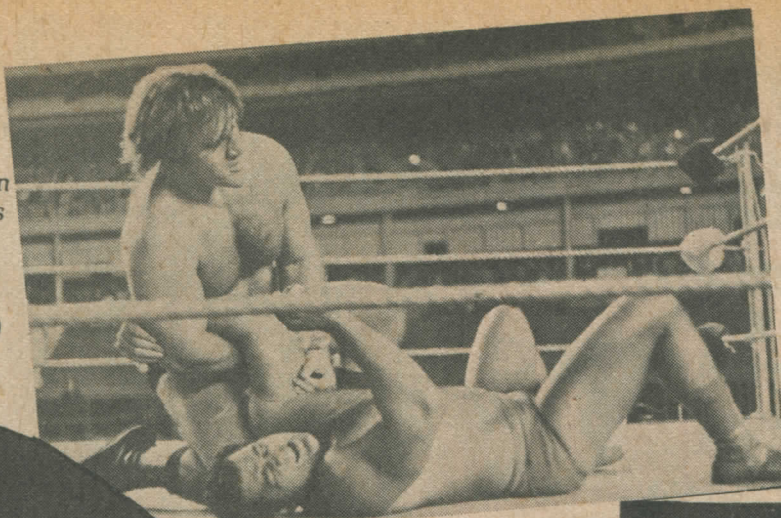
From north of the border came votes for the "Battle of the Giants"—Jean Ferre vs. Don Leo Jonathan. Paul Jones' incredible upsets over both Jack Brisco and Dory Funk Jr. drew support as did Jack's match against Dory. And as far as

the people around Toronto were concerned, nothing topped the bout in which Pampero Firpo annihilated the despised Sheik.

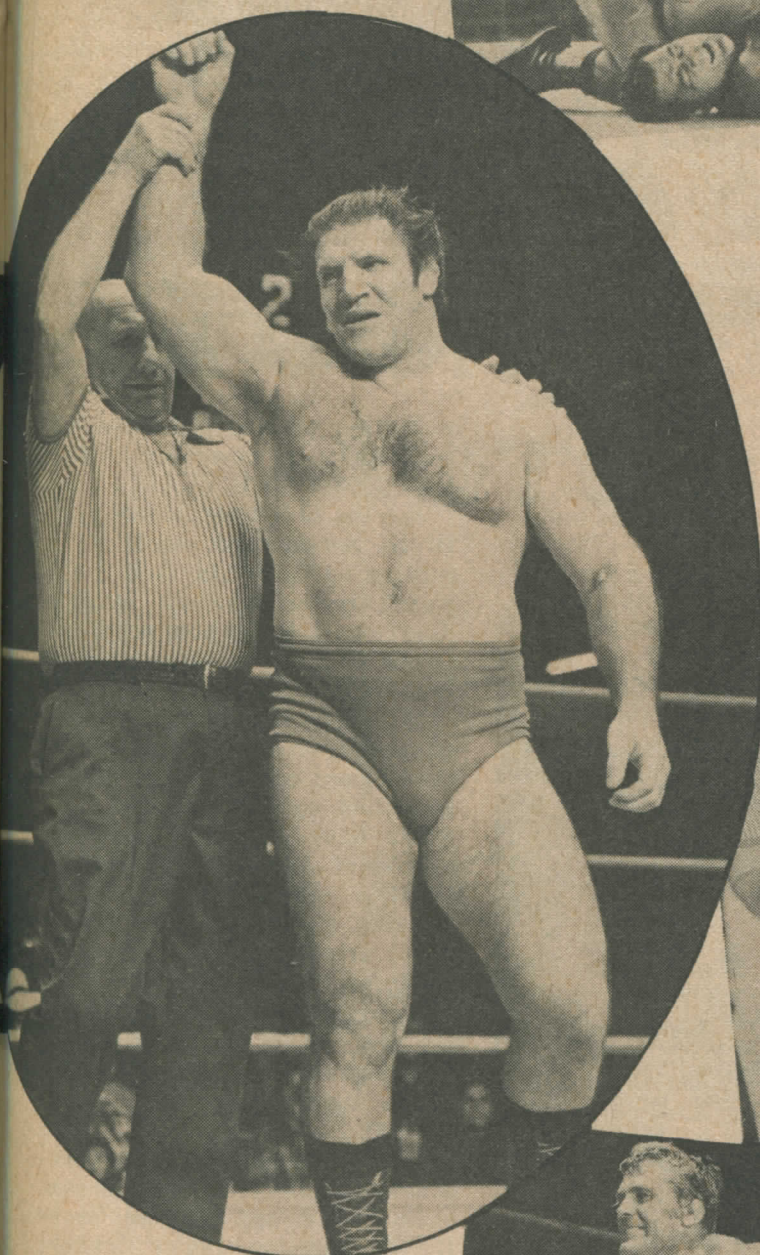
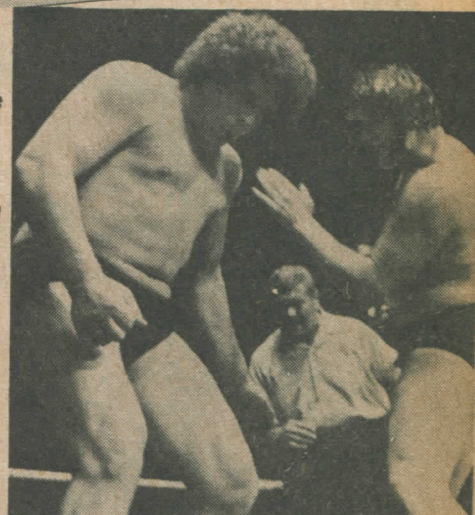
But the match which drew the most support was one held in California and one which has become the annual highlight of promoter Mike Lebell's year—the 22-man, \$11,000 Battle Royal!

The Olympic's Battle Royals are always sold out in advance and hardly need extra added attractions to beef them up. But this one *had* such an attraction—and that

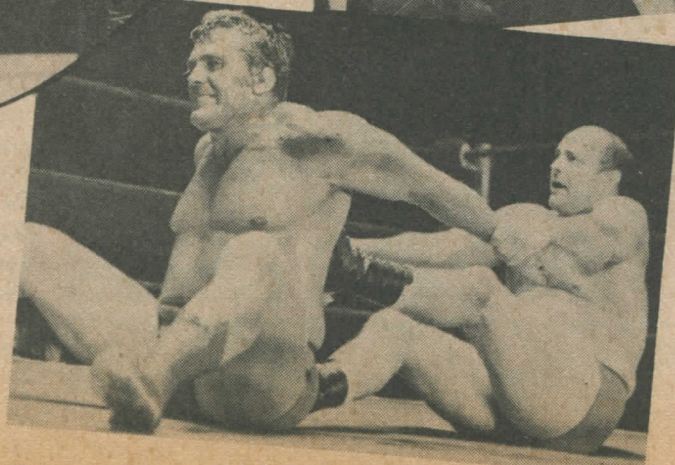
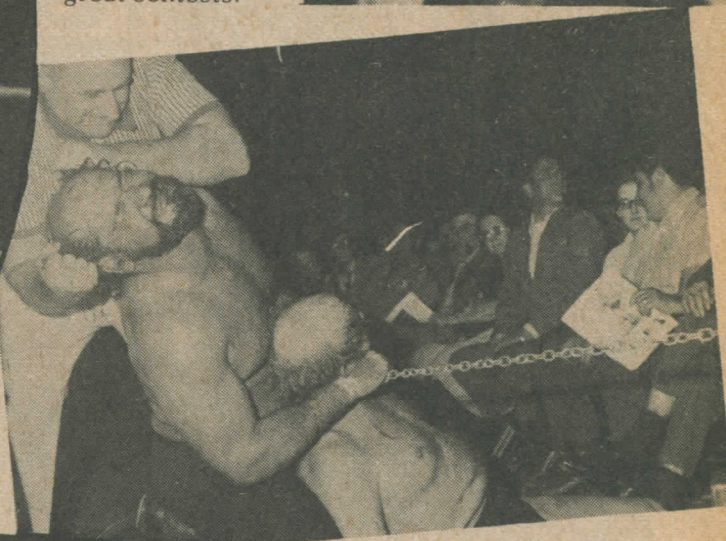
Bruno Sammartino was involved in two matches receiving many votes for "Match of the Year." One was his epic struggle against Pedro Morales (right), but his victory in the 22-man Battle Royal (below) was what won it for Sammartino.



Don Leo Jonathan smashes Jean Ferre (right) during the famous "Battle of the Giants," the bout which had all Canada in an uproar for weeks. Many fans voted for this and the rematch as the best match during 1972, a year which had a number of great contests.

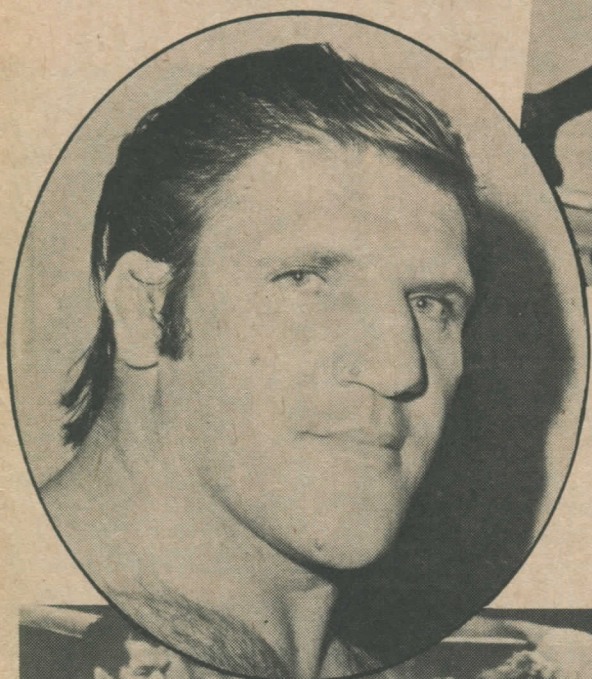


Fans appreciate a clean scientific match too, as the votes for the Verne Gagne-Edouard Carpentier matches indicated. They met in Montreal and wrestled to a sensational draw.

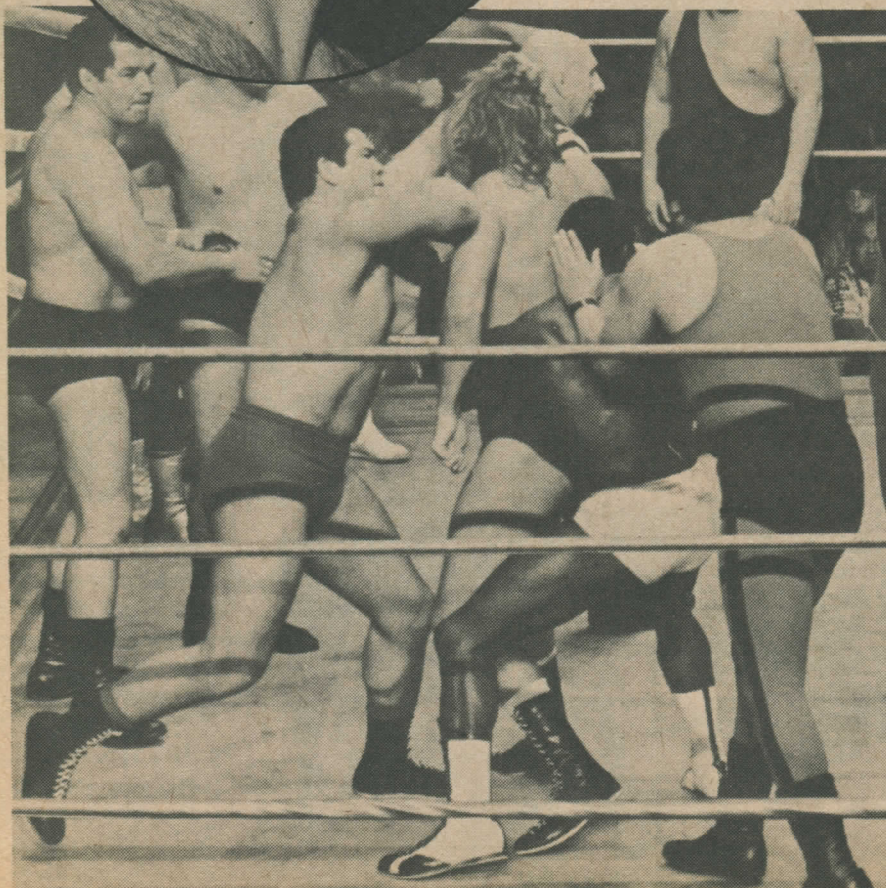


Ciclon Negro tries to strangle Dory Funk Sr. with a length of chain as the referee attempts to pull Negro away by the hair. The Negro-Funk war received quite a few ballots.

**BRUNO WHIPS
21 MEN
WITHIN AN HOUR!**



Cowboy Frankie Laine and Mil Mascaras do a job on Black Gordman (above). Bruno is hidden behind the referee. Below: The beginning of a Battle Royal is a wild scene.



attraction was one of the main reasons why fans considered this the **MATCH OF THE YEAR.**

For the first time in five years, Bruno Sammartino would be returning to California. And if that wasn't dramatic enough, after the dust cleared, it was none other than Bruno who picked up the \$11,000 first prize money!

More than 25,000 fans were turned away from the Olympic and the three closed circuit theater TV outlets which carried the match. "We would have sold three times the number of tickets we sold," said an Olympic official. "Once word got out that Sammartino was coming in—it seemed everybody in L.A. wanted a ticket."

Although Sammartino was the big news, there were 21 other top stars just itching to get their hands on the former champion—and the \$11,000.

The list of participants Sammartino would have to beat was an awesome one indeed. Former Battle Royal champion Rocky Johnson was joined by such top stars as John Tolos, Mil Mascaras, Earl Maynard, Kenji Shibuya, Massa Saito, Black Gordman, Dutch Savage, Haystacks Calhoun, Pantera Negra, Ripper Collins and others.

In addition to the battle for the final prize, it was expected that

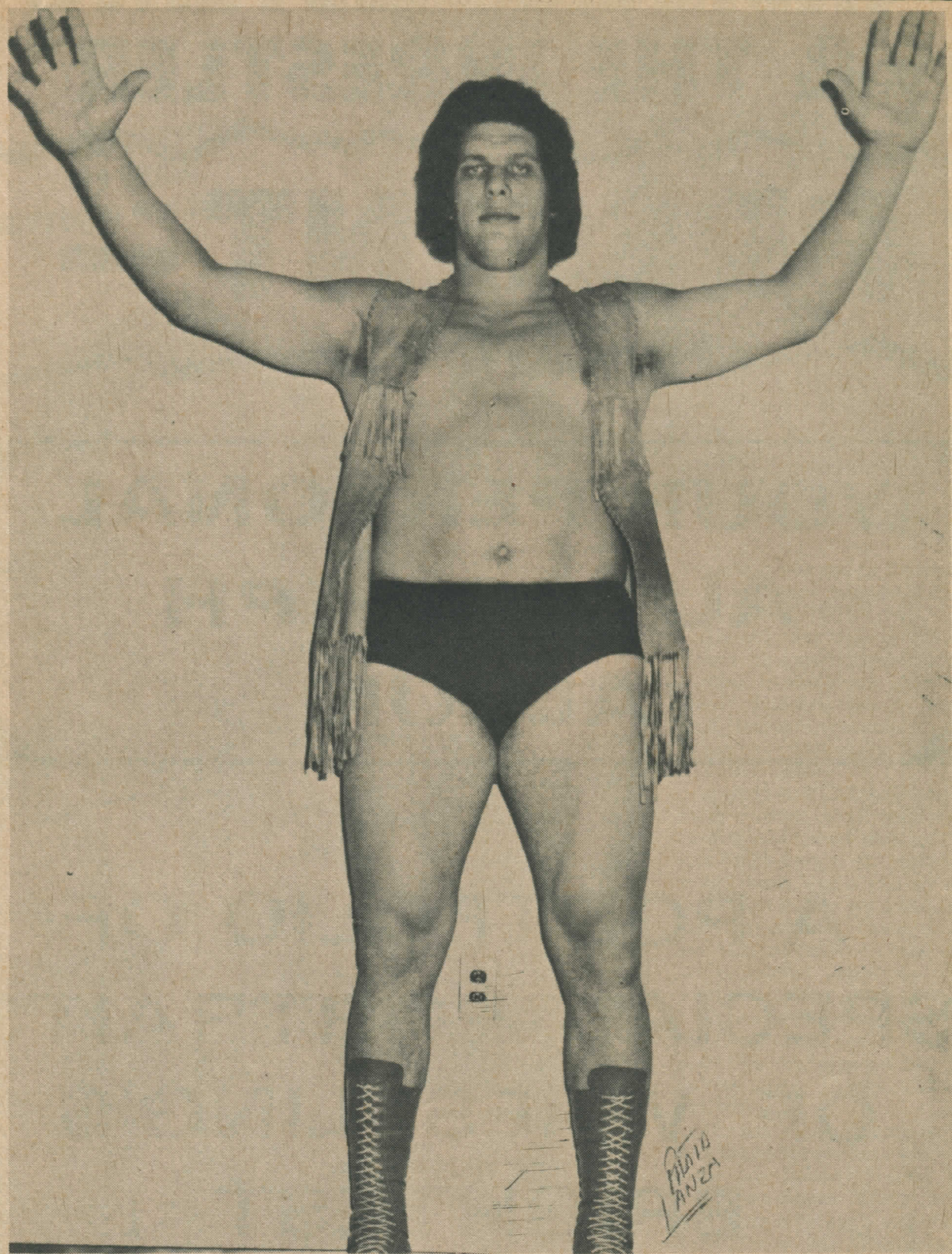
(Continued on page 56)

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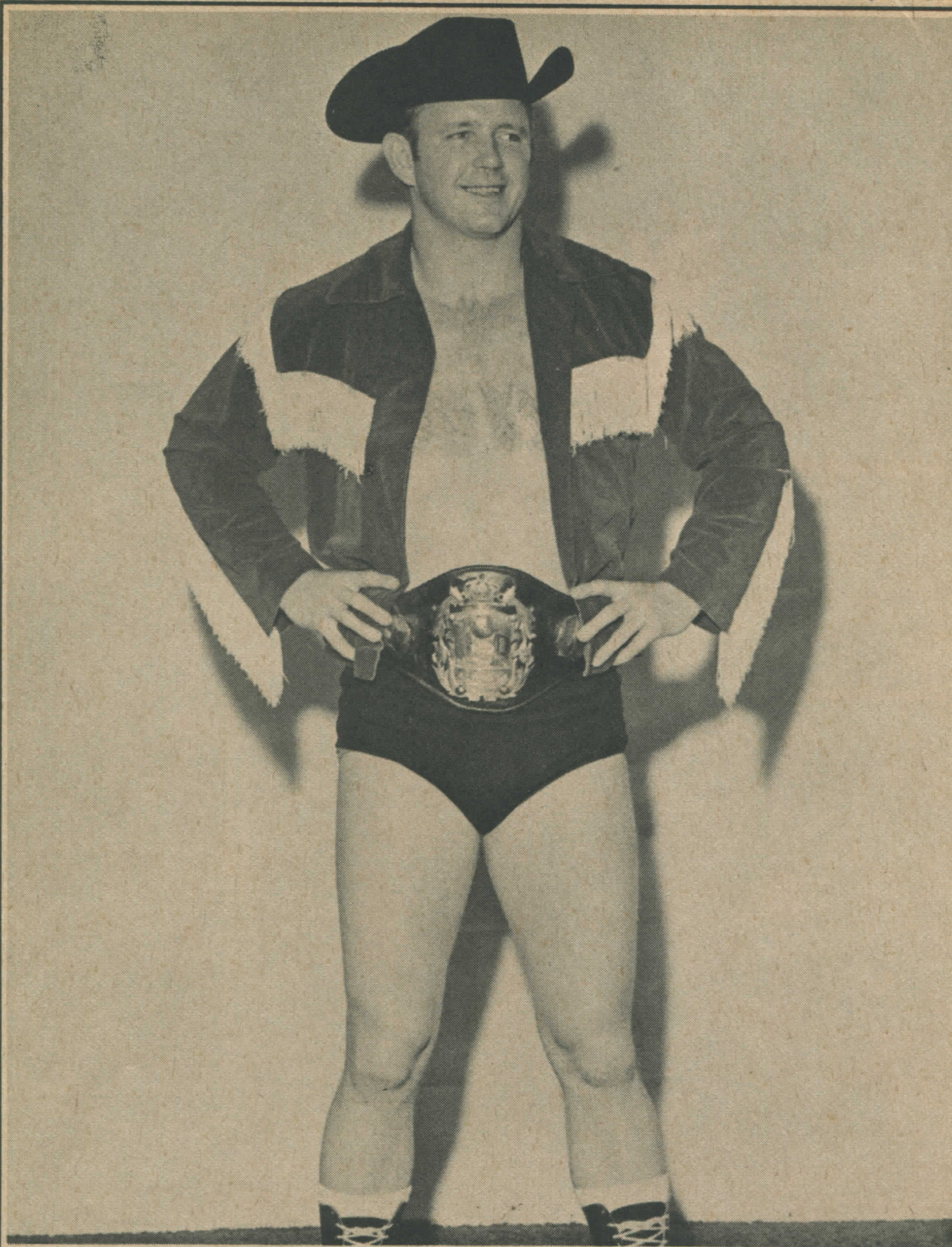


RENE GOULET

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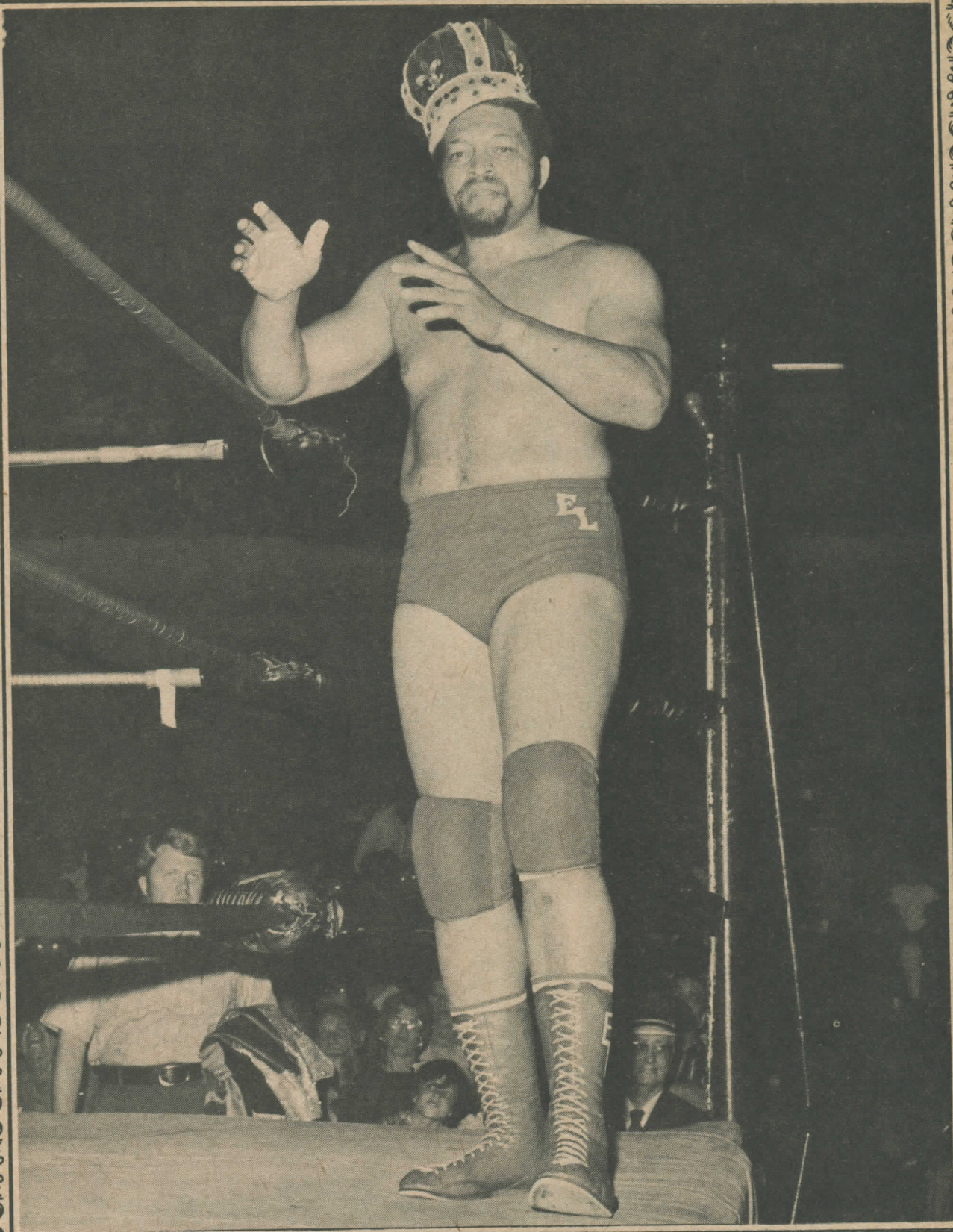
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DORY FUNK JR.

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ERNIE LADD

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BILLY GRAHAM

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BRUISER AND CRUSHER

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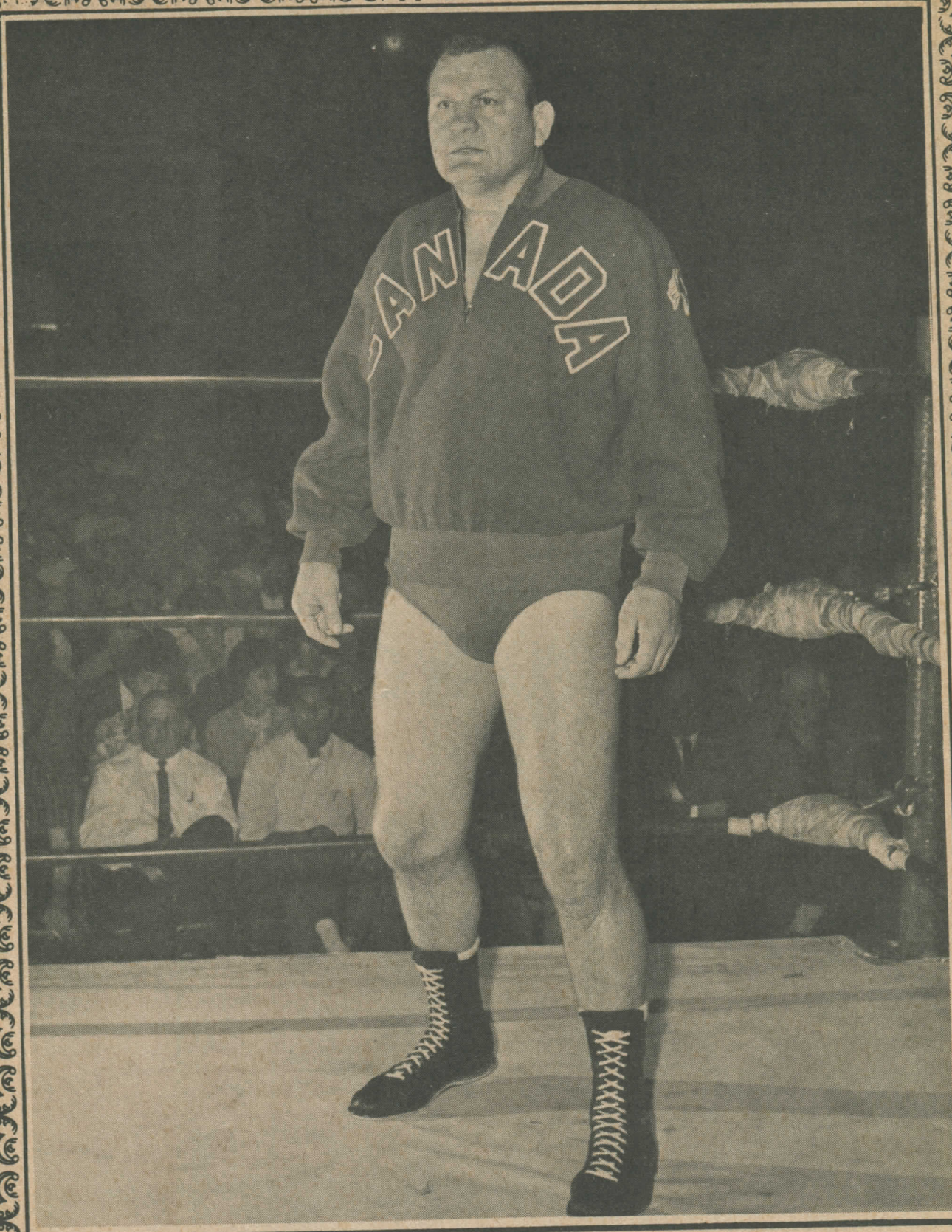


CHIEF WAHOO McDANIEL

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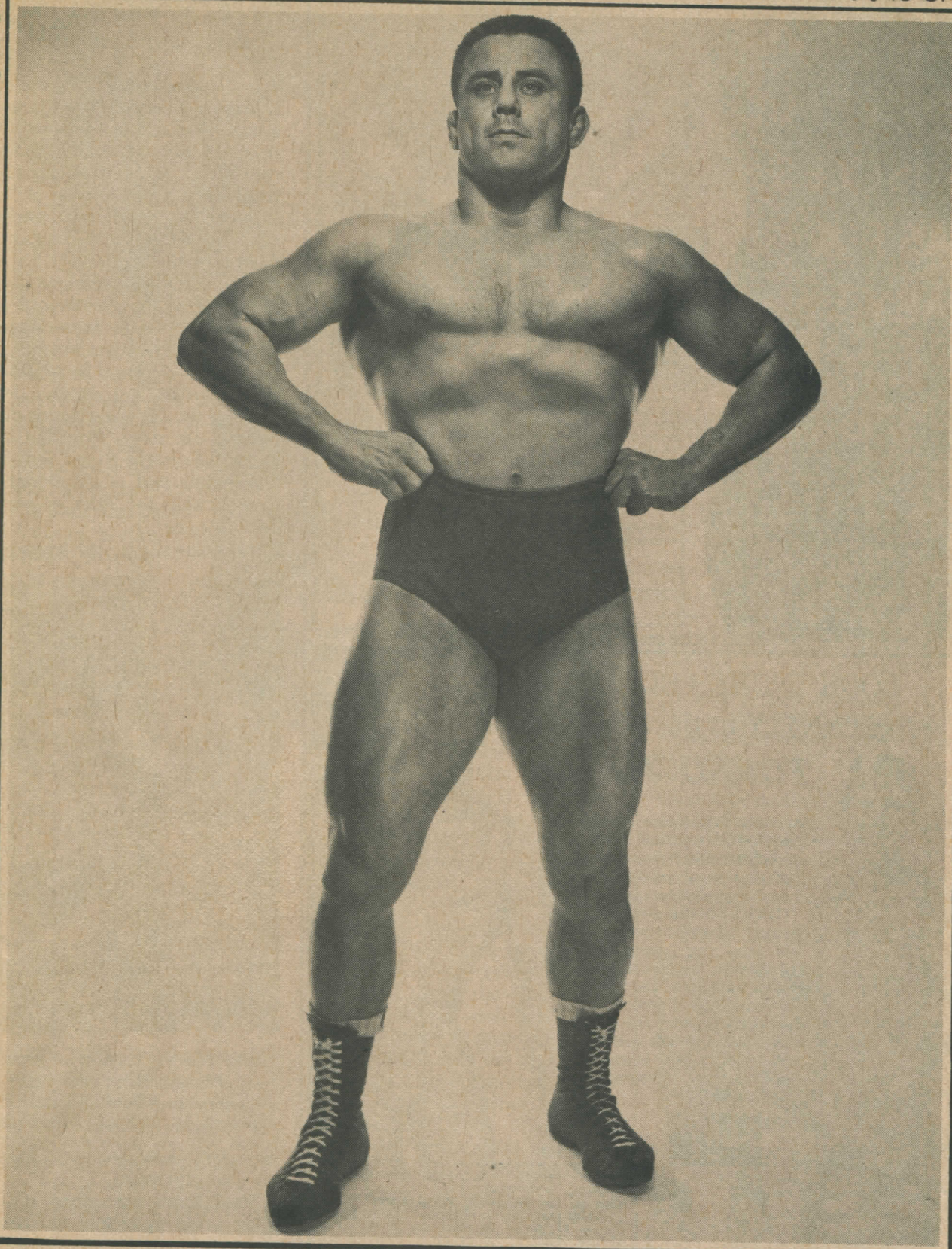


GENE KINISKI

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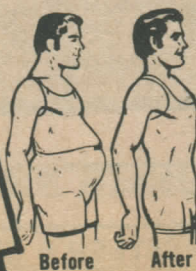
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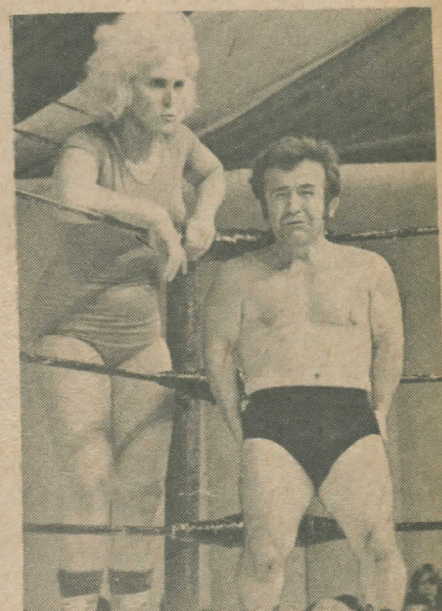
**A YEAR OF
CONTROVERSY**

(Continued from Page 12)

es and cage matches. The use of foreign objects (as we reported) reached a new high, and in one instance the results of a match were reversed by the World Wide Wrestling Federation—the famous case of "Who Brought The Knife Into The Ring?" involving Chief Jay Strongbow and King Curtis.

Controversy erupted over the continued use of the piledriver as a dozen wrestlers were hospitalized because of it. Wrestlers began appearing as guest referees in record numbers starting yet another dispute. And our special investigation culminating in our story "Nobody Gives A Damn About The Rules" indicated a tremendous lack of knowledge as to exactly what the rules of wrestling happen to be!

1972 was also a year when certain

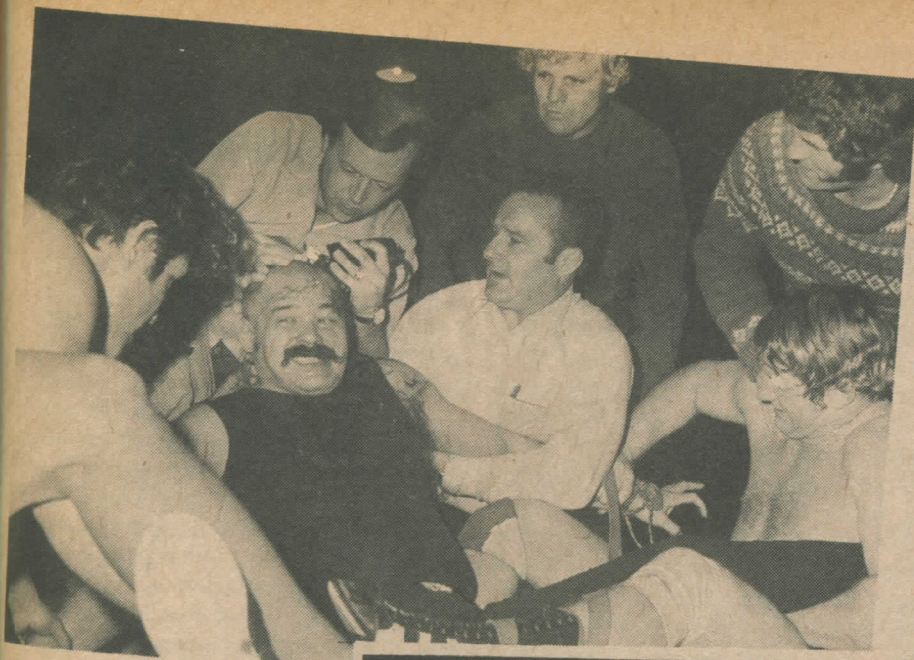


Billy The Kid cries after getting a public spanking from tag team partner June Peterson after Billy accidentally knocked June over.

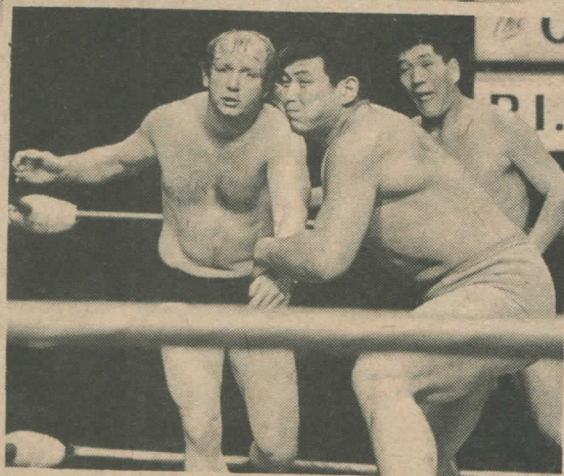
wrestlers really came into their own as true superstars.

Paul Jones astonished the wrestling world by ending the unbeaten streak of Jack Brisco and stopping Dory Funk Jr. in a title match within the space of three months!

Lord Al Hays, a relatively unknown Englishman, captured the imagination and hearts of Texas fans with a



Apache Gringo puts up a good struggle (above) but it's no use as he gets scalped after he lost an Indian Scalp Match to Suni War Cloud. Right: Sakaguchi whips Dory Funk Jr. into the ropes during a match between Dory and Terry Funk and Sakaguchi and Shoehi Baba for the International tag team championship. The bout was TV'd back to Japan.



series of bloody matches against Ciclon Negro. He also came back from a serious injury to win the Western States championship. In addition, Hays became—and may yet become—the man who ended Dory Funk Jr.'s reign as N.W.A. world champion.

In a two-out-of-three fall title match, Hays upset the champion by winning two falls fairly and squarely! The belt actually changed hands as Hays was announced as the new world champion.

But Dory Funk Sr. charged into the ring, accused the referee of a fast count, and slugged the official, getting his son disqualified. Because of the disqualification the title could not change hands and Hays was reluctantly forced to return the belt. However, he will appeal the decision since the act of Dory Jr. getting disqualified took place after the match had been officially declared over.

Pampero Firpo had an outstanding year. He administered a fearful beating to The Sheik in Toronto. He beat

The Sheik so badly the Arab offered to team up with him just so he wouldn't have to face him again! But Pampero does his best work alone, as he did the night he won the U.S. heavyweight championship from Bobo Brazil.

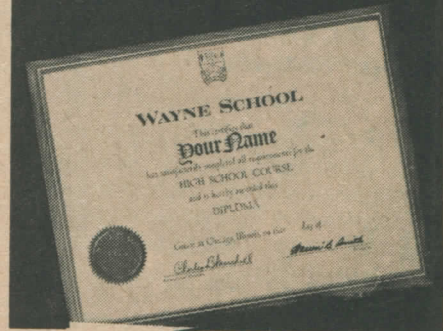
Tag teams played their usual important part. Brainy Bobby Heenan created a new combination—the Blackjacks—who struck terror into every heart, with the possible exception of Bruiser and Crusher, the only team able to handle them.

The Mongols split up, as did Goliath and Black Gordman (for a while), Shibuya and Saito, Tarzan Tyler and Luke Graham, Rene Goulet and Karl Gotch, Jim Valiant and Ernie Ladd, and Bearcat Wright and Bobby Shane. Shane, in fact, did a lot of splitting up. After finally getting himself reunited with valette Miss Sherri—Bobby and Sherri split up yet another time.

But for every team which split up—some great teams of the past got together again. The Tolos brothers—

(Continued on page 52)

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A YEAR OF CONTROVERSY

(Continued from Page 51)

Chris and John—joined in Los Angeles. The Miller brothers are again side-by-side. A weird character named Mark Manson put together a devastating combination called the Graduates and John Fargo replaced older brother Jackie (he went into semi-retirement) to keep the great Fargo brothers a force to be reckoned with.

It was a great year for Japanese wrestlers. Professor Toru Tanaka and Mr. Fugui won the W.W.W.F. tag team belts and Kenji Shibuya and Mr. Saito did the same with the Americas belts before splitting up. Sakaguchi won the United National

Championship and the team of Sakaguchi and Shoehi Baba won the coveted International Tag Team title from Dory Funk Jr. and Terry Funk in a match televised by satellite back to Japan.

The N.W.A. tag team belts bounced back and forth between the Fabulous Kangaroos and the team of Ben Justice and the Stomper and Nick Bockwinkel and Ray Stevens kept a tight hold on their A.W.A. title belts.

For some wrestlers it was a terrible year. John Tolos lost his Americas championship and took a terrible beating at the hands of The Sheik. He finished the year mending from

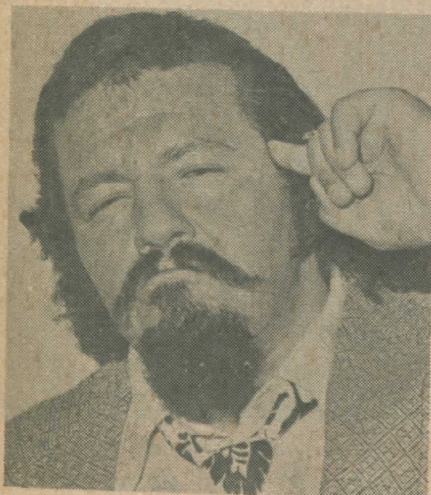


1972 was a super year for some people, especially women like Fabulous Moolah and Vicki Williams (above, left), who grappled in New York for the first time in history. Above, right: Paul Jones skyrocketed from practically nowhere to become a top contender for the title. He posted upset wins over Jack Brisco and Dory Funk Jr. One of the most successful teams launched this year was called the "Graduates" managed by a weirdo calling himself Mark Manson!



injuries. J.C. Dykes came within a few feet of being lynched by an angry Texas mob. Midget wrestler Billy the Kid was spanked by his woman tag team partner during a mixed match in front of thousands of people. Baron Von Raschke issued a "10 Most Wanted" list and not only failed to whip one man on it—he lost his W.W.A. heavyweight crown to Sailor Art Thomas—a man he didn't consider enough of a threat to put on the list!

Poor Hans Mortier was unmasked as Mr. X, Bruce Swayze was unmasked as the Black Baron and Tim Woods unmasked himself as Mr. Wrestling. Johnny Walker was



Lou Albano, last year's Manager of the Year, had a disastrous 1972 as he sent a bunch of wrestlers after Pedro Morales' crown and came up emptyhanded each and every time.

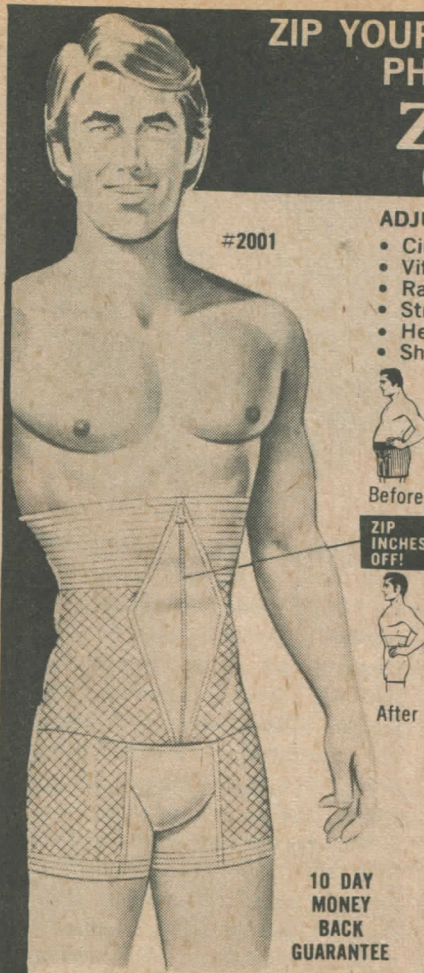
unmasked as the Grappler and one of the Assassins unmasked himself on TV—and nobody knew who he was anyway!

Others having rough years included Apache Gringo, who got scalped in mid-ring, and Lou Albano, who sent five wrestlers after Pedro Morales' W.W.W.F. heavyweight title (the wrestlers Albano managed were Spoiler, Baron Sicluna, King Curtis, Tarzan Tyler and Luke Graham), and came up empty-handed each time.

1972 also had its share of humorous moments. Ivan Kalmikoff drew chuckles from everyone as he tried to marry off Mighty Igor. Igor is still single and still receiving love letters. Who'll ever forget those precious pictures of Abdullah the Butcher eating a raw chicken? Paul Jones

(Continued on page 54)

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A YEAR OF CONTROVERSY

(Continued from Page 53)



Pampero Firpo (left) captured the U.S. title from Bobo Brazil, but Bobby Shane (below) lost both tag team partner Bearcat Wright and long-time valette, Miss Sherri.



tossed a diamond-studded title trophy into a Florida river because he "didn't need it." Little Bruiser teamed up with Big Bruiser and Crusher to drive Bobby Heenan and the Blackjacks wild. And the Grand Wizard revealed himself to be Abdullah Farouk—something most folks had a hunch about anyway.

But as it does every year, wrestling also experienced sadness as it buried two of its greatest stars, Luther Lindsay and Ray Gunkle.

For newcomers, 1972 was a banner year. The stars seem to be getting younger and better. Fans discovered such bright future champions as T.N. Turner, Sue Greene, Lynn "Gidget" Cory and Cindy Allen. Exciting new male stars included the new Zebra Kid, Ray Rougeau, Mike Graham, Carlos Colon, Chuck O'Connor, the McGurie Twins, Aldo Bravo and Ruben Juarez. Fans also took another young man to their hearts... a man by the name of Rick Ferrera, a preliminary wrestler struggling to make it into the big time.

There were great matches during 1972. Verne Gagne and Edouard Carpentier proved that clean wrestling hasn't gone out of style. Jean Ferre and Don Leo Jonathan clashed in the "Battle of the Giants." Little Beaver regained the midget championship from Sky Lo Lo. Jack Brisco and Dory Funk Jr. began a cleanly-fought title bout which ended in a Battle Royal. And speaking of Battle Royals—Bruno Sammartino won the biggest and most important one as he took the \$11,000 first prize in the Olympic Auditorium's Battle Royal as 25,000 fans were turned away!

The three major world champions had their hands full during 1972 but each got out of the year unscathed. Dory Funk Jr. had a very rough year as he continued to defend his title in more areas against more opponents more often than any champion in history. Paul Jones, Jack Brisco and Lord Al Hays each came extremely close to knocking the crown off its precarious perch on Dory's head.

Verne Gagne got by his two top challengers—Billy Robinson and Ivan Koloff—but it seems Verne will have to call on every bit of experience if he is to keep the crown away from Robinson.

Pedro Morales successfully defended against George "The Animal" Steele, Stan Stasiak, King Curtis, Pampero Firpo and Freddie Blassie, among others. But Pedro met his biggest test late in the year when he and Bruno Sammartino hooked up in a sensational title match which, after an hour and 16 minutes, ended in a draw!

What kind of year was 1972?

It was a helluva year. And '73 should be even better! □



Don Bolander, M.A., University of Chicago; B.S., Northwestern University; Director of Career Institute; authority on adult education.

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THE MATCH OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 38)

rivalries would be settled as well. Gordman and Goliath wanted to get Shibuya and Saito and made no bones about it. But Earl Maynard and Rocky Johnson wanted Goliath and Gordman just as bad. It promised to be wild.

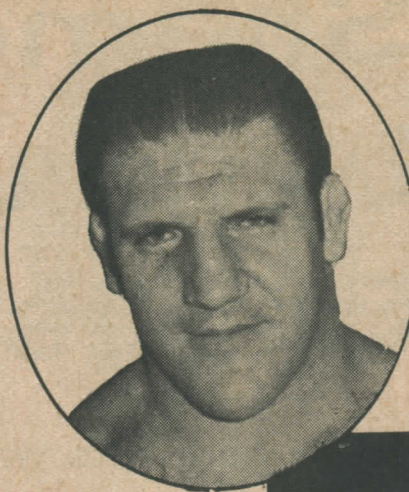
Following is the way our ring-side reporter described the action:

If there would have been a prize awarded to the most active wrestler, Dutch Savage would have won in a walk. Dutch belted everyone in sight as soon as the bell rang, and was personally responsible for the elimination of six wrestlers!

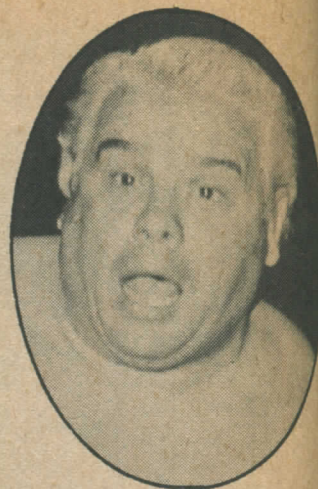
Savage began . . . well . . . savagely, going after Peace Brother #1 and giving him the ignominious honor of being first to go. It figured. Savage just can't stomach anything that has to do with peace. While he was busy with him, Gordman and Goliath, as everyone figured, headed right for the Japanese duo and recreated one of the many wars these villains have fought with each other. Salvator Lothario and La Pantera Negra double-teamed Wildman Armstrong, but were only half successful. Armstrong was through, but he took Negra with him, with a hidden bit of help from Negra's friend, Raul Mata, who later said it had been "a kick" helping Armstrong dump his buddy.

The most humorous incident centered around 620-pound Haystack Calhoun. Haystack didn't have to chase anybody. He just stood there in mid-ring, watching wrestlers bounce off him in all directions. Nobody could budge him. It was Savage who came up with the idea of how to get rid of Calhoun. He and Ripper Collins ducked down behind Calhoun's knees while Gordman, Goliath, Tolos and King Krow all charged. It worked. Haystack tumbled over backwards—and 12 wrestlers piled on him in the corner while the referee counted to three.

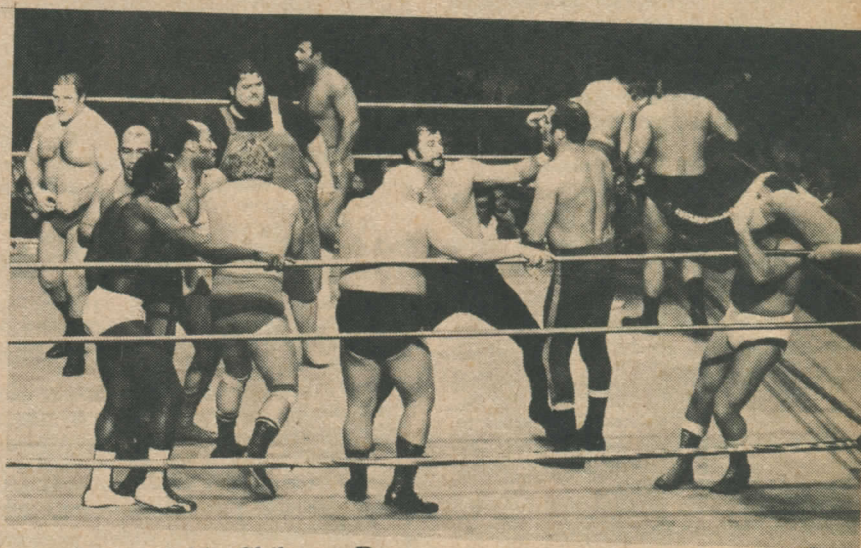
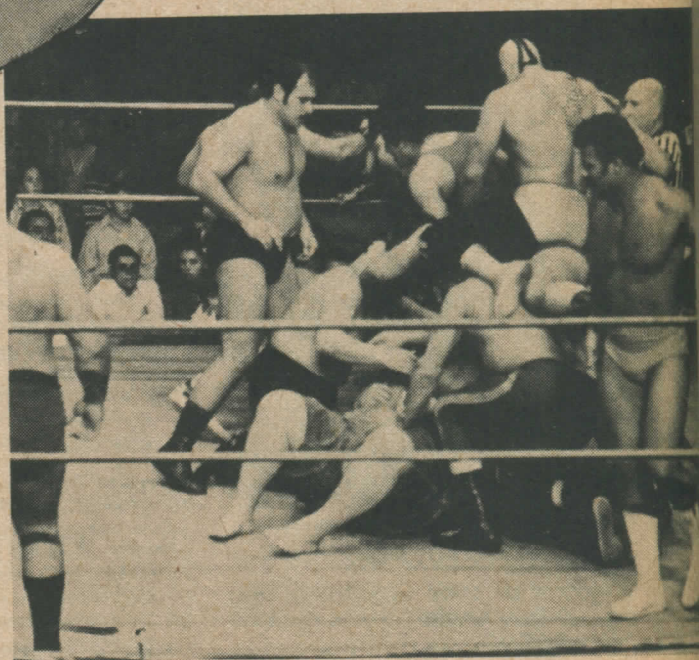
Wrestlers were flying around left and right. Mil Mascaras trapped King Krow in a corner and got rid of him, but then Mil joined one of the strangest alliances ever seen in a Battle Royal. He got together with Shibuya, of all people, but it



Bruno (left) and Ripper Collins (right) were the only two left at the end of the Battle Royal.



Poor Haystacks Calhoun (right) is on the bottom of a huge pile of wrestlers in the corner of the ring. Below: It's every man for himself at the start of the 22-man Olympic Battle Royal!



was understandable. Shibuya, Dory Dixon, Raul Mata, Francisco Flores and Mil all ganged up on Goliath and Black Gordman.

Goliath and Gordman stood back-to-back for mutual protection, an

old street fighting gimmick, but it did no good. Mascaras, Shibuya and Flores dumped Gordman over the top rope, and when Goliath

(Continued on page 58)

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What's more, you'd learn a great secret from these wealth builders.

- Nearly every person who built great wealth for himself in recent years did so with little or no cash and wound up with a lot of money!
- If you met these people, as I have, you'd soon be convinced that the best way to build a fortune today is by using OPM—other people's money. It is the most powerful, the greatest key to fast riches, starting with little or no cash, known in the world today!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ty Hicks has built several fortunes for himself and others, using the methods he gives you in this book. Today he has several automatic incomes going for him. "Automatic" because he spends less than two days a week, supervising these businesses—with ample time for travel, entertainment, hobbies!

During his career, Mr. Hicks has made money in hotels, apartment houses, rental real estate, boating, shipping, publishing, amusements, the stock market, and theaters.

More amazing still, he began his search for wealth with no contacts, no private fortune, his father having died when Mr. Hicks was only 14.

In this book you'll find scores of tried and proven ways to borrow money quickly, and use it to build a fortune...

Whether you're a man or woman, old, young, married, unmarried...Even if you haven't got a job...or are a member of a minority group...or have no permanent residence...these techniques will work for you! You'll discover...

- How you can get up to \$5,000 easily on your signature alone, even if you have been refused before!
- How you can get up to \$5,000 for as little as \$8 a month!
- How you can get as many as six signature loans, for \$5,000 each—in ONE DAY—for a total of \$30,000!
- How you can get a large sum of money—thousands of dollars—that does not have to be repaid, is interest-free, tax-free, and can be used for any business purpose, including your salary!
- Over 10,000 ready sources of cash for you (many by mail)!

I'll show you how to use a loan as your springboard to riches! For unlike a car or TV loan, which doesn't pay you anything back, except pleasure, a business loan will often pay you a PROFIT of \$50, \$100, \$200 or more PER WEEK!

Put these wealth-studded tips to work and you can soon be richer than you ever thought possible.

Fantastic Fortune-Making Bargains!

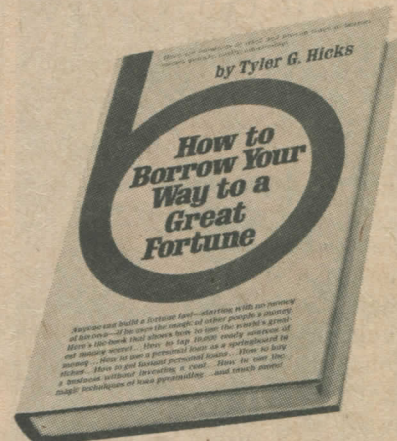
There are unbelievably powerful fortune-making bargains available to you today. Opportunities—open to everyone—that you can take advantage of, with little or no cash, that can stuff wads of profit dollars in your pocket, quickly and easily! For example, you'll discover—

- How a \$23,500 split-level home was purchased for only \$180.22—and sold for thousands of dollars profit!
 - How a 27-room mansion on 13 waterfront acres was purchased for only \$98.18!
 - How a \$12,000 farm-style home was purchased for \$55!
 - How you may "mortgage out"—a technique that gives you ownership of a property with no money down and with a cash payment to you!
- Incredible as it seems, these opportunities are in your local area right now! You don't need any kind of "luck" to find them. I'll show you exactly how to find such fortune-making bargains right away, in the pages of my book. Just apply a little imagination to fit them into your own situation—and you're on your way to a fortune like these.

Shortcuts That Zoom Your Income!

You can, by using the methods in this book, make yourself a millionaire. Others have done exactly that. I've watched them. People like—

- Cliff R. using the secret just mentioned above. Cliff purchased and sold some 25 properties in a six-month period. His profit on these deals was \$68,000!
- Sam T. used another one of the sources revealed in this book to get \$400. He invested this money in valuable postage stamps, and sold them to fellow stamp club members. Within 3 years, he was worth \$500,000!
- You'll see how Larry M. got the money he needed to buy \$14,000 worth of paintings. In 2 years, he was offered almost FIVE TIMES as much for them. But Larry waited another year and sold them for more than SIX TIMES the purchase price: \$100,000. This is a neat income—particularly when you remember that Larry didn't invest a dime of his own!
- Ben D., considered such a poor credit risk that six banks had refused him time after time, used a method revealed in this book to get a \$50,000 five-year loan in less than 30 minutes! He used this money to buy a restaurant. Today, he has five booming restaurants, and more money than he can spend!
- Joel L. started with a gas station which he took over, using one of the many easy loans I tell you about. Once Joel had the gas station, he began to look around for other easy-money



businesses. Soon he had a real estate office, a pet shop, a hardware store, a second gas station, and a laundry! His net income from these businesses was \$75,000 the first year!

- Herb F. was a mailman for the Post Office, in a little town in the midwest. Using the method I tell you about—for obtaining large sums of money for as little as \$8 a month—he obtained \$40,000 without putting up a cent! He used this money to buy a \$600,000 motel. Today he's on easy street after only a few weeks!
- Clint T. couldn't stand the 9-to-5 routine of his job. He decided he had to make a pile of money as quickly as possible. Using one of the sources revealed in this book, he borrowed \$2,000 and invested it in a meat business. In less than 2 months, he made a profit of \$12,300—OR OVER \$200 PER DAY FOR DOING NOTHING, while he had other people's money invested!

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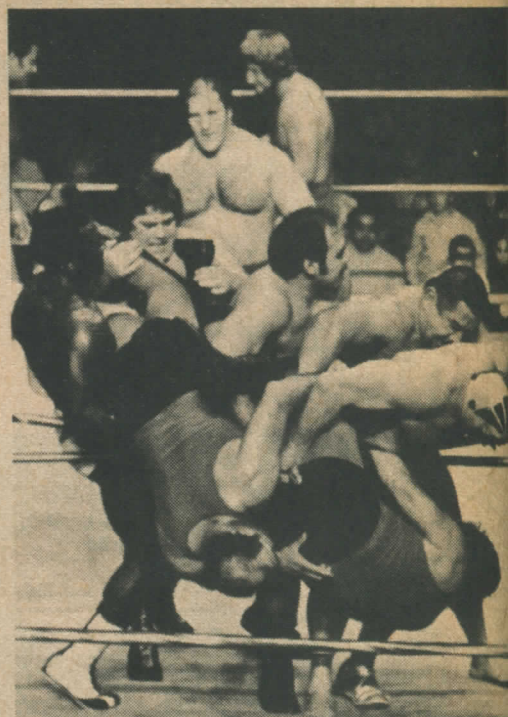
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THE MATCH OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 56)

Dory Dixon, Raul Mata, Francisco Flores, Kenji Shibuya and Mil Mascaras all chip in to send Goliath and Black Gordman over the top rope and out of the ring. They originally began working on only Gordman, but then Goliath made the mistake of trying to help his tag team partner.



turned around to pull his partner back, he was uplifted by Dixon and Mata. And Cowboy Frankie Laine, who had started the whole thing by dragging Gordman into the ropes, didn't even get in on the fun of seeing Gordman topple out. He was lying in a corner, dazed by a savage karate chop from Shibuya, who paid his respects to Laine before joining the melee that eliminated Gordman and Goliath.

Throughout these shenanigans, a man who'd play a very important part in the Battle Royal before it would end, Ripper Collins, successfully avoided elimination by hiding whenever he could, avoiding contact with other wrestlers. At one time he even sneaked out of the ring—but was not seen leaving or returning.

John Tolos thought he'd found a friend when Dutch Savage helped John dump Mil Mascaras and then Francisco Flores, but Tolos was in turn belted silly by Savage, who really seemed to be enjoying himself. After Savage had taken care of the Golden Greek, he went after Shibuya, stomping on his bare feet with his heavy boots. When Kenji couldn't take anymore—a right to the jaw flattened him and Savage pinned him.

Dutch then took care of both Tony Rocco and Raul Mata while Bruno Sammartino and Salvator Lothario dumped the remaining Japanese contender—Saito. Savage went after Bruno, and while Sammartino's back was turned, up popped Ripper Collins, who almost tore Salvator Lothario's head off.

With the field substantially re-

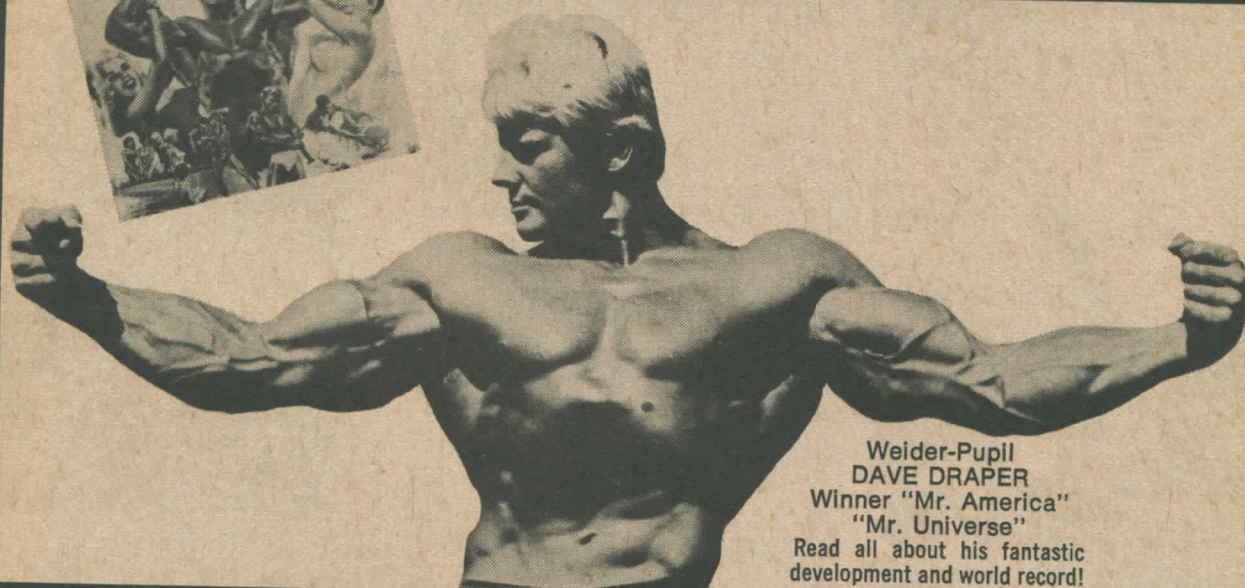
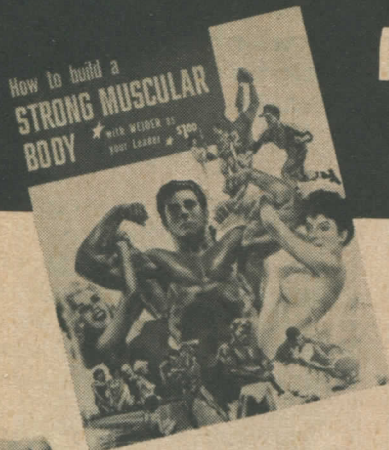
duced, Collins made up for lost time and took out both Earl Maynard and Dory Dixon with a little help, of course, from Dutch Savage, who was everywhere. Meanwhile, Laine, who had never been counted out, revived and headed right for Dutch. It was a mistake. Dutch ravaged the Cowboy and Laine looked like he'd reached the end of the trail.

He was saved, momentarily, by Rocky Johnson. But Johnson, Savage and Laine got all tangled up in a heap and rolled out of the ring and out of contention.

That left the two men who had been staging their own private war off in a corner—Sammartino and Ripper Collins. These two had been going at it like cavemen for about five minutes, not particularly interested in what was going on around them. Suddenly, they noticed they were the only ones left.

Bruno softened Ripper up with a few bodyslams. It was the beginning of the end. Sammartino picked Collins up in his crushing bear hug, shaking him around like a pencil. Collins had no choice. He had to concede—and Bruno dropped him like a sack of wheat. It was all over. Bruno Sammartino was the champion—and \$11,000 winner—of the third annual Olympic Battle Royal! □

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YOUR LETTERS...

(Continued from Page 6)

pion and it's only a matter of time before he finishes Vachon for good.

RALPH LERRE
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Jerry Brisco is every bit as good as his brother Jack. As a matter of fact, I'll go a step further and say Jerry is better. He did beat Rip Hawk, the guy who upset Jack, and that alone should prove my point. Jerry still holds the Eastern States title and Hawk has failed to win it from him on several occasions. He's a future world champion. Just you wait and see.

ROSE HIGGENS
Wheeling, West Va.

Lord Al Hays shouldn't be allowed to hold the Western States title. He's not a true westerner. It degrades the title to have a sissy Englishman holding a title that Terry Funk or Dory Jr. should be holding. Strip that limey of the title!

MICHAEL GERIG
Amarillo, Texas

How could you guys call Ernie Ladd a champion? He's the clumsiest ox I've ever laid my eyes on. Ladd can't wrestle for beans. It's not saying too much for Waldo Von Erich when a guy like Ladd comes and whips him. Waldo must've been real sick that day. Ladd stinks!

ALICE MCCREERY
Buffalo, N.Y.

"The Champion Everybody Hates," that was the title of the feature you wrote about Baron Von Raschke. Well I've got news for you. I don't hate him. The Baron is misunderstood. If the fans would stand behind him instead of booing him they'd find out what a great champion this man really is. I've come to realize how classy the Baron is. It's time the rest of the world did.

ALAN BELKIN
Detroit, Mich.

The Fabulous Moolah is still the women's champ and she shows no signs of weakening. Vicki Williams,

Paula Kaye, The White Venus and Peggy Patterson have all fallen before the greatest women's champ ever, Moolah. She could beat any of the male champions. That I guarantee.

PEG MARKHAM
New York City, N.Y.



El Sicolico's still in Japan waiting to wrestle Baba for the International title and one fan says he doesn't have a chance.

THE CHALLENGERS

El Sicolico may be Mil Mascaras' brother but I think he's nuts. How could he think he has even a slight chance against the International Heavyweight Champion, Baba. Baba would slaughter that masked midget in less than a minute. Smarten up, Sicolico. Go back to Mexico and avoid any confrontation with Baba.

YOSHINO KUMATA
Los Angeles, Calif.

The Sheik may claim he doesn't want the United States championship but he really does. He's just afraid of the new title holder. No,

not Bobo Brazil, but the one and only Pampero Firpo. If Pampero loses the belt, which is one chance in a million, you can be sure The Shiek will go after it. You've got a long wait, Sheik!

STEVE ZELAMSKY
Toronto, Canada

I just returned from Greece, after a three-month vacation. While visiting a small town a few people invited us to the matches. It was there we saw the Greek legend, Megaritis. Was he dynamite! He wrestled two men at the same time, both were bigger than he, and he completely wiped them out. They didn't stand a chance the whole time. I hope he comes to the United States.

JIM KAVELLES
Bronx, New York

Billy Graham will never be the Americas Champion. If you've ever seen him you know why. Graham, unlike the rest of his famous family, can't wrestle. He makes his opponent tired by making the guy chase him around the ring because Billy's so scared. Get rid of this Graham brother. He's a disgrace to a great family.

LARRY HAMCHECK
Van Nuys, Calif.

Paul Jones doesn't need the Southern States title. He's got everything else. Paul just doesn't want it. The only thing he really craves is a crack at Dory Jr.'s title, but Jr. is too chicken to accept a match with him. A few months from now you'll see a new champion—Paul Jones—after the National Wrestling Alliance forces Funk to wrestle him.

DENNIS MILLER
Miami Beach, Florida

Dick The Bruiser is right. He'll kill Von Raschke in a single match. Why do you think the Baron only wrestles Bruiser in tag team matches? He's afraid of dying, that's why. Bruiser has defeated every so-called big name in the business. Wrestlers all over the world fear him and wouldn't step in the ring with him for any price. In a way I can't blame Von Raschke for chickening out. I would.

MARCIA ERMA
Detroit, Mich.

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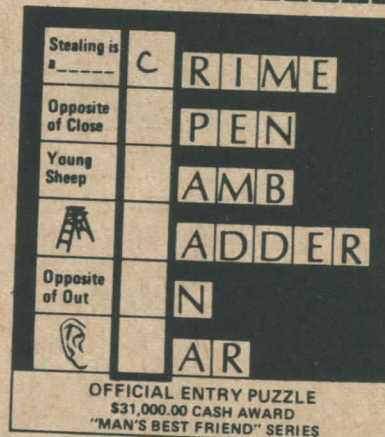
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WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 24)

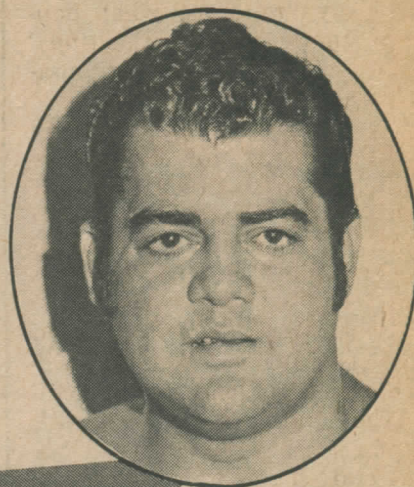
proof. They, too, climbed aboard the bandwagon.

What was Pedro doing when all this was going on?

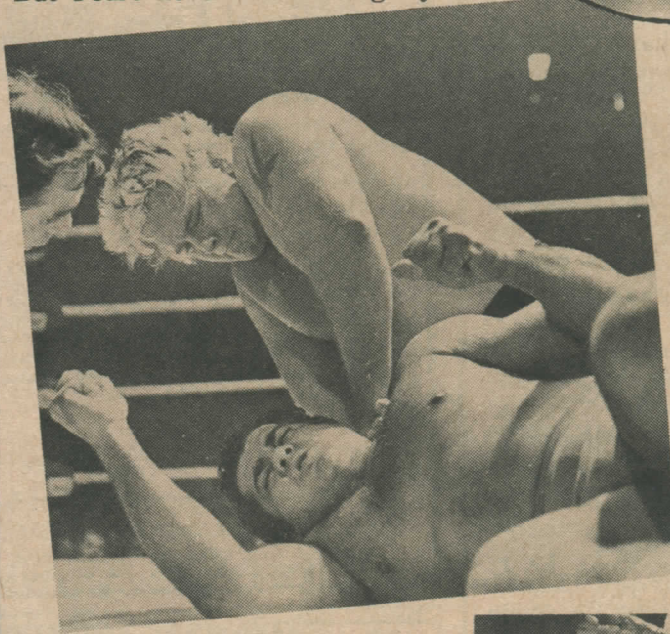
Nothing.

"If I deny the rumors it will only keep them alive," Morales said. "You know and I know they're not true. I let my work in the ring speak for me."

So all during 1972 Pedro remained quiet. He was barraged with vicious insults and ethnic slurs. He was called the "chicken" champion, the "champion by default." But Pedro never lost his dignity.



Morales (above) has conducted himself with incredible dignity when you consider the abuse he's been forced to take. Left: Pedro's first title defense of 1972 (successful) was against Handsome Jim Valiant. Below: He also had a rough time against tough Freddie Blassie.



He never lowered himself to the level of those who hated him.

Yet while this was going on another phenomenon was taking place. Everywhere Pedro Morales would wrestle attendance records would fall. Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, New York, they all enjoyed packed houses as the fans streamed through the doors to hate Pedro or love him.

But with all the pressures put on the young Puerto Rican champion, none hurt him so much as the people who said he was holding the title only because Bruno Sammartino wasn't interested in taking it back. No matter who Pedro wrestled—Steele, Blassie, Stasiak, Firpo—he was also wrestling someone else. And that other person was the ghost of Bruno Sammartino.

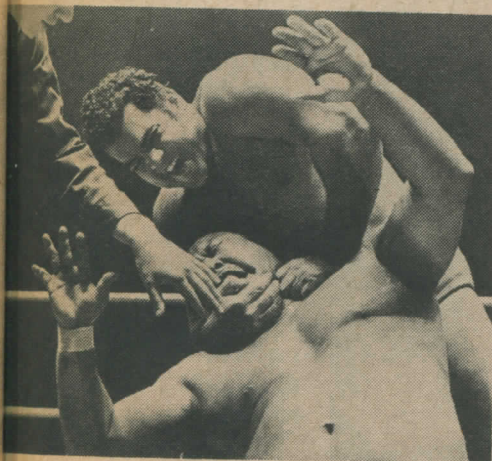
Morales had no way to combat



this. If the Spoiler bragged he could whip Pedro, Morales could always say "we'll see what happens when we get into the ring." But how do you defeat a reputation?

Of course, during this trying time, Pedro was not alone. His faithful fans, to a large extent comprised of his fellow Puerto Ricans, stood alongside him all the way. And Pedro never forgot them.

"Those are the people who count," he said one night after a rough match against Baron Sicluna. "Those people have been with me from the beginning. When the others started rumors about me or booed me I knew that there were



Morales puts pressure on a chin-lock against Tanaka. He holds Toru responsible for causing his temporary split with Sammartino.

also people out there rooting for me. They stayed with me in the bad times as well as the good. They're the main reason I am where I am today. They are why I continue. I am a symbol for those people... a symbol that a Puerto Rican can be the best at what he does. They are my people. And if I earn their respect I am happy."

August was a rough month for Morales. He'd beaten George Steele and Steele wrote a by-lined story about how the referees protected Morales. Then, during a tag team match against Professor Toru Tanaka and Mr. Fugi, a misunderstanding arose between he and partner Bruno Sammartino. It was a misunderstanding which would, in the long run, be the best thing to ever happen to Pedro.

(Continued on page 64)

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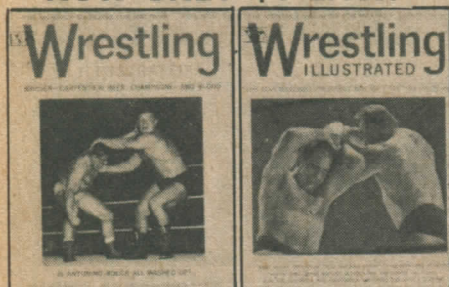
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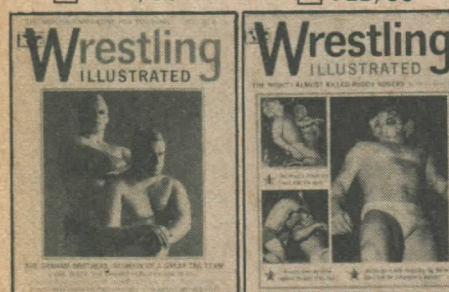
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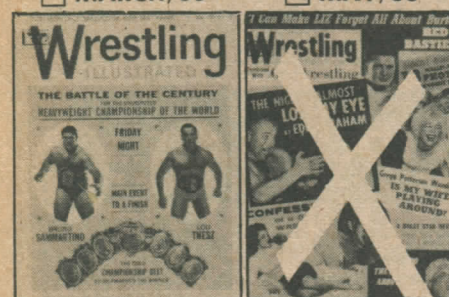
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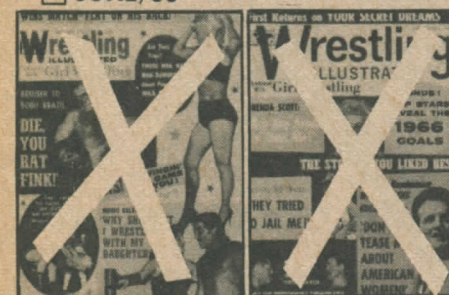


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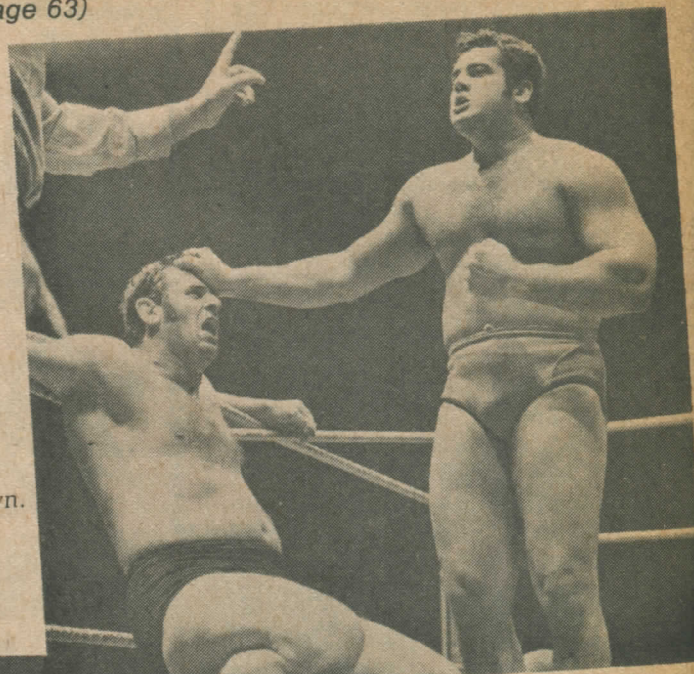
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WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

(Continued from Page 63)

Pedro threatens to belt Baron Mikel Sicluna, one of the many adversaries manager Lou Albano sent in against him in hopes of capturing the W.W.W.F. crown.



Pampero Firpo is slammed head first into the official's table as he and Pedro go at it outside the ring. Morales twice defeated Firpo, in New York as well as Boston.

Because of the misunderstanding, a match was signed between Pedro and Bruno Sammartino. It would be held in Shea Stadium. It would be for the W.W.W.F. heavyweight championship. It would also bring the Morales-haters out of the woodwork again.

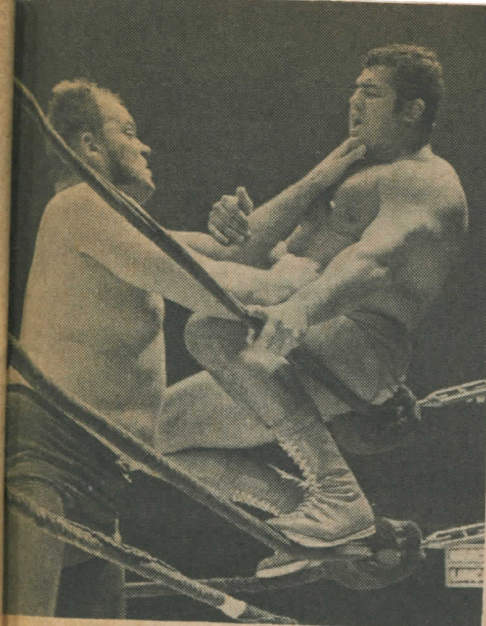
"Now you'll see what a bum Morales really is!" one fan wrote. "The myth of Morales is about to be exploded," wrote another. "Bye-bye Pedro," penned a third.

Pedro knew the showdown would have to come sooner or later. But Bruno was his friend and he didn't want this match to be held in an atmosphere of anger. Yet, on the other hand, he couldn't back out either. That would be the worst

thing he could do. "I can only hope," he told us, "that Bruno and I can become friends again after this is over... win, lose or draw."

Pedro trained for this match like he never trained before. Sammartino, who himself wanted to answer some critics who were saying he didn't have it any more, also trained hard. On the night of the match they both entered the ring in the best condition they'd ever been in. They'd have to be. Before curfew ended the contest in a draw—they'd wrestle for one hour and 16 minutes!

No, Pedro didn't defeat Bruno. But, as Bruno said afterwards, he gave him the toughest match he ever had. Yet that draw proved more important to the Puerto Ri-



Stan Stasiak tries to set Pedro up for his devastating "heart punch," but Stasiak wasn't too successful. can than any victory he'd ever won. Because at the conclusion of that match both Bruno and Pedro received standing ovations—from everybody.

"I was wrong about Pedro Morales and I want to apologize," wrote one of our regular readers whose letters were usually anti-Morales and ended with "wait till Bruno gets hold of him." The letters came fast and furious. They came from Pedro's fans who'd finally won the chance to gloat a little and from his detractors who largely admitted that maybe they were wrong about the champion.

But despite it all, the man around whom the controversy dwelled, Pedro Morales, didn't change one bit. "I'm not going to go around shouting I'm the greatest or anything like that," he said. "I'm not going to hold any grudges against the people who thought I wasn't a good champion. They're entitled to their opinions. I'm the same man now as I was earlier in the year when everyone said the referees were protecting me."

After the Sammartino match the criticism stopped immediately. Just as he'd always done, Pedro Morales proved his point—not with his mouth—with his ability.

The pressures Pedro faced during 1972 could've ruined a lesser man. But as he's finally proven, and as his fans knew all along, Pedro Morales is a champion in every sense of the word. And that's why Pedro is an outstanding choice as **WRESTLER OF THE YEAR!** ☐

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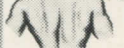
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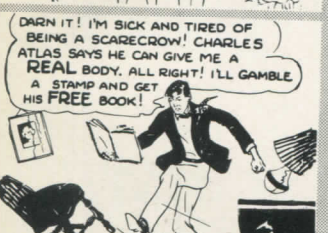


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